The Phantom Treasure

THE PHANTOM TREASURE

GROVE

SAALFIELD

Jannet sat on the edge and let herself down without trouble.

THE PHANTOM TREASURE

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CHAPTER I

JANET LEARNS HER NAME

"THERE'S a package for you, Janet." A smiling face was thrust within the partly open door.

"April fool," replied Janet, not looking up from her book for a moment. Then with a twinkle in her blue eyes, she raised her hand impressively and began to recite in sonorous tones the lines that she was learning.

"Exactly like Miss Sanders! Do it that way in class, Janet! I dare you!"

"I would, but it might hurt her feelings to do it in earnest as she does. No, I want to read poetry like Miss Hilliard,—but I can't say that I like to commit it. I want to pick out my own kind, Allie May."

Allie May came inside the door and leaned against it. "Well, Janet," she said, "I think that you might

believe me when I tell you that there is a package for you down in the office. Honest. No April fool. Miss Hilliard said for me to tell you to come down. I don't know why she didn't give it to me to bring up. Perhaps she wants to see you anyhow. This is what she said: 'Janet has a box. Please tell her to come down to the office.' "

"H'm. Lina and I had our light on after hours last night. But it was not long, and we had a grand excuse. Lina lost a page of her short story that she had to hand in this morning. Honestly, Allie May, is there a package for me? I never had a box in my life except things sent from the store." Janet had put her book down now and was on her feet starting toward the door and her schoolmate.

"You haven't! Poor you! I hope that it's a grand cake with lots of good things. Maybe the box was so big that Miss Hilliard knew I couldn't bring it up!"

Allie May made big eyes as she linked her arm in Janet's and walked with her to the top of the stairs.

"If it is, you shall have the first and the best out of it. But it isn't. It's probably something brought here by mistake. Thanks, Allie May."

Janet was half way down the long, dark staircase that led to the lower hall when she finished her remarks. Allie May saw her friend's fluffy, golden locks fly out in the wind created by the rapid descent.

Smiling, she went to her room, next to Janet's, somewhat struck with the fact that Janet had never received a "box," that delight of a school-girl's heart.

The lower hall was dark on this rainy first of April. None of the doors were open, and Janet Eldon, slight, active girl of fourteen years, stood poised on the lower step for a few moments, looking out through the mullioned panes of the tall, wide door at the entrance. Eaves were dripping and she heard the beat of the drops upon the tin roof of a porch outside.

Eyes the color of brighter skies considered thoughtfully the prospect till the sound of an opening door made them turn in another direction. Quickly Janet stepped to the floor, rounding the newel by catching hold of it and swinging herself around it. At the second door, down the hall to her right, she presented herself.

It was Miss Hilliard, principal of this small school for girls to whom Janet curtsied prettily. "Allie May said that you wanted to see me, Miss Hilliard," she said.

"Yes, Janet. There is a package here in the office that must be meant for you, yet the address is peculiar, to say the least. It is about the size of the usual box that comes for the girls,—come in to see it for yourself."

Miss Hilliard drew back from the door, admitting

Janet, who went to the table by the big desk. There a box of medium size reposed, a square package, wrapped in heavy paper and well tied with cord.

"You will notice that the return address is with initials only, from some hotel in Albany, New York," Miss Hilliard continued.

Janet stood close to the table, looking with interest at the package, saying first, as she had said to Allie May, that there was "probably some mistake". But she caught her breatth as she looked at the address. "Why—" she began. "Why, how *queer!*"

"Yes, isn't it? Rather pretty, though. Could that be your name, Janet? There is no one else here,—there has *never* been any one here by the name of Eldon; and you will observe that the name of the school is given, the correct address."

"I see."

Janet looked again in the upper left hand corner. The initials were P.V.M. But it was the address which filled her with surprise. The package was addressed to Miss Jannetje Jan Van Meter Eldon!

The longer she looked at it, the stranger it seemed. "Why, Miss Hilliard, I don't understand it at all. Could it be some joke? Oh, I just imagine that there is some mistake in addresses. Shall we open it?"

"Yes, Janet. But I shall be very busy for a while and have no time for this. I will have it taken to

your room and you may do the investigating. I need not tell you to preserve the treasure intact if it should be full of diamonds."

Janet looked up at the tall, slender woman beside her and laughed at the suggestion. She was not afraid of Miss Hilliard, though many of the girls were. Had not Janet been in this school since her sixth year? The older woman's arm now drew her close and her cheek was laid for a moment against Janet's hair.

"Now run along, child. Get back to your lessons and I will have this sent upstairs by Oliver. There he is now, in the hall. Report to my own room after dinner, Janet, and I shall be able to see you in your room if necessary."

Through the partly open door they could see the janitor passing. Summoned by Miss Hilliard, he came after the box immediately and started up the stairs with it. Janet, holding Miss Hilliard's hand looked up into the kind eyes and asked soberly, "Do you suppose that really is my name, Miss Hilliard?"

"It is not impossible, Janet. You have always thought that the Janet came from your grandmother's Scotch ancestry, haven't you?"

"Yes, Miss Hilliard. You know I have everything about her family and pictures of my father from the time he was a baby."

"I hope that there will be something very interest-

ing inside that box, Janet,—but there is the bell now. I must go to the parlors in a moment. I am expecting a call from one of our patrons this afternoon." Miss Hilliard was now the gracious head of the school in her manner, which had the dignity that usually accompanies such management.

Janet, too, made her departure with the formal curtsey which was the custom of the school. Never in the presence of Miss Hilliard did the girls forget their "manners". If so, they were instantly reminded of them.

Mechanically Janet ascended the stairs, her thoughts elsewhere. A caress from Miss Hilliard, rare, but expressing a real affection, was always something to be remembered. Janet "adored" Miss Hilliard, as she occasionally said to Allie May Loring or Lina Marcy. Then, here was this box. In her heart Janet felt that it was for her.

"That quaint old Dutch name!" she thought. "Can it be that my mother—", but Janet grew confused. There was no use in conjecture. She must open the box. How she hoped that it *was* for her. The suggestion of diamonds amused her. She had not lifted it and did not know its weight. Probably it was heavy, because Oliver had been asked to carry it up. No, Miss Hilliard usually had him do that.

On entering her room, Janet saw the box on the floor. No wonder. Her table was full of books

and papers. Her desk looked worse. Lina's coat and hat were on one of the straight chairs, the dictionary reposed on the other. If Miss Hilliard were coming up after dinner the room must be made perfect. One thing, there were no odds and ends of clothing or ornaments around. They were trained to keep such things in their places. But Lina had had an errand and rushed off to class, not hanging up her wraps as usual.

Janet gave a glance at her little alarm clock which occupied a prominent place on the desk. It was very disappointing. She had exactly two minutes before the next recitation. Did she know that poem, or didn't she? Saying over and over again the new lines, Janet again ran downstairs, the back stairs this time, to the recitation room.

CHAPTER II

HER MOTHER'S BOOKS

At the door of the recitation room, Janet met her room-mate Lina Marcy, but as neither had a moment to spare, Janet did not mention her latest source of thrills. The teacher already had her roll book open and was marking it. She looked impatiently at the girls as they entered and took their regular seats, not together, for the class was seated alphabetically. Lina and Janet exchanged a glance which meant "beware". This particular teacher was temperamental.

Lina was opening her book to refresh herself on the lines which they were to commit. What a poky day it was, to be sure, she was thinking. Even the April fool jokes were stupid.

Janet could scarcely collect her thoughts, so busy was she in thinking about the address on the box. "'Jannetje'!—how quaint!" By the "irony of fate", as Lina told her later, she must, of course be called on first for the verses. Called back in her thoughts to the work at hand, Janet hesitated, start-

ed correctly on the first few lines, but soon stumbled and forgot the last half altogether.

The teacher looked surprised, an unintentional tribute to Janet's usual form. But hands were waving and some one else gave the lines wanted. Lina gave Janet a sympathetic look, which Janet did not even see. Something even bigger than making a perfect recitation was looming in Janet's foreground. When at last the recitation was over, she ran upstairs to the box. Of course the "je" was a sort of affectionate addition, a diminutive they called it, she believed. Was it really her name? *Was* she a Van Meter? Who was P.V.M.? P. Van Meter, of course. Suppose she had a grandfather,—or even a grandmother that she did not know!

It took only a few moments to open the box, for she cut the heavy cord to facilitate the matter. White tissue paper met her eye, and a little note lay on top, that is, something enclosed in a small white envelope. Janet opened it and read—

My dear Miss Jannetje:

I am asked to write a few lines to explain this box. Your uncle, Mr. Pieter Van Meter, is in communication with your attorney and you may have heard before this how he has discovered you and wants to see you.

As he asked me to prepare such a box as school

girls like, I have prepared the contents accordingly and I hope that you will like it. I am wrapping, also, two books that were among your mother's things, because I feel sure that you will be interested in seeing something of hers right away that was in the old home place. In one of them I have tucked a note evidently written by your father about you to your grandfather. Of course you know that you were named for your mother, but you will be glad to read about it in your father's handwriting.

May it not be long before we see you in this odd but beautiful old place that was your grandfather's.

Sincerely yours,
Diana Holt.

Janet devoured this note rapidly. "Now, who can Diana Holt be?" she thought. She could scarcely wait to see the books, but they were not on top. Instead, Janet uncovered a smaller box which contained a cake carefully packed. Packages in oiled paper or light pasteboard containers obviously held a variety of good things, from fried chicken to pickles and fruit. Ordinarily Janet would have exclaimed over the array, which she carefully deposited together upon her table, after first removing certain books and papers and spreading the first thing that she could think of over it. This chanced to be a clean towel.

At last she came to the books, wrapped well in paper and pasteboard. Truly Miss or Mrs. Diana Holt was a good packer.

The prettier or newer book Janet opened first. It was a handsome copy of Tennyson's poems, bound in green and gilt. At once she turned to the leaf on which the inscription was written, "To my Jannetje, from Douglas".

There, too, was the note, addressed to "Dear Father." It was brief. "You received my telegram. I am sure. Jannet sends her dear love. We have named the baby for her, because I begged for the name. I will have more time to write to-morrow. Jannet wants me to write every day, but you will be quite as pleased, I think, with less frequent reports. There will be the three of us to come home next summer."

Janet noted her father's more or less familiar signature. She had seen more than one of his letters to her grandmother. "And I suppose that I never got there at all. How did they lose me, I wonder? Why didn't Grandmother Eldon leave me some word about my mother?"

Such were Janet's thoughts. But there was nobody to tell her how it had happened. In some way her mother's people had lost all track of her. The wonder was that her uncle had found trace of her after so long. Her uncle Pieter! How interesting

to have kept the old Dutch spelling. She would sign all her papers and letters now with two n's in Jannet!

The other book was more plain, also a book of poems, a copy of Whittier's verse; and the inscription upon the fly-leaf interested Janet even more than the other. It was to "my dear Mother, Adelaide Van Meter, from her loving daughter, Jannetje Jan Van Meter Eldon."

It was true, then. Here was the evidence. What a pretty, clear hand her mother had. A little pang went through Janet's heart that she could not have known her parents, but she resisted any sad thought, saying to herself that she ought to be thankful to know at last who her mother was. The last doubt in Janet's heart was satisfied. Knowing one or two sad stories in the lives of a few girls at the school, she had wondered if, possibly, there had been any separation, some unhappy ending to the marriage of her father and mother. This she had never expressed, but it had haunted her a little. At the date of her birth it had been all right, then, and she knew that she was only five or six months old when her father had brought her to his mother. She would find her mother's grave, perhaps.

There was much to be explained yet, to be sure, if it could be, but Janet was very happy as she now gave her attention to the discarded feast packing its

units back into the box with some satisfaction. Janet Eldon had had feasts before, but the materials had all been purchased at some shop. After dinner she would get permission from Miss Hilliard, when she showed her the books and notes.

Now there was laughter in the hall. She heard Lina's voice and hastened to unlock her door. Could it be possible that she had spent all Lina's lesson period in looking at the books, reading the letters and thinking?

"'Lo, Janet," said Allie May Loring, walking in ahead of Lina Marcy. "Get your box?"

"Yes, Allie May, a scrumptious box like anybody's. My mother's people have discovered my existence at last. Really, Lina. Somebody at the OLD HOME PLACE fixed up the box for me, and they sent me two books of my mother's. Just think, girls, I was named for her and everything. I'd rather you would not speak about it to the other girls, though. It always embarrassed me a little, you know, that I did not know anything about my mother, but you see, Grandmother Eldon died before I was old enough to ask very much about it. I called her Mamma at first; then she was so *very* sick and for so *long*." Janet paused a moment.

"Really, girls, this has been about the only home that I have known, this and your house, Lina."

The other two girls had sat down to listen quietly.

Allie May was the first to speak. "I never would have thought anything about your not knowing about your mother. You always seemed perfectly natural about everything, Janet."

"Did I? I'm glad."

"You are a little more—what does Miss Hilliard call it?—reserved, with all the girls, than some of us," said Lina. "She tells us not to tell all we know, and you don't!"

Allie May and Janet laughed at this. "Miss Hilliard's brought me up, you know," smiled Janet. "I can remember yet crying for 'Gramma' and having her comfort me. Then came your auntie to teach here, Lina,—and I was fixed!"

"I can remember how crazy I was to see you, Janet," said Lina. "I wasn't allowed to come here until I was twelve, Allie May; and Auntie told me all about the 'darling child with the golden hair' that took piano lessons of her and practiced away so hard with fat little fingers. She said she wanted to hug you every other minute, but had to teach you piano instead. Your fingers aren't fat now, Janet."

"When did you first see Janet?" asked Allie May, interested.

"The first time that Aunt Adeline brought her home with her. Miss Hilliard used to look after her the first two or three vacations. You weren't with her all the time, though, were you, Janet?"

"Just part of the time. She had my old nurse that took care of me while Grandmother was sick, and we'd go to the seashore, or somewhere in the mountains. But Miss Hilliard kept an eye on me. I never can pay her back, or your Aunt Adeline either."

"You'll never need to. Just having you in the family is enough. But won't it be wonderful to have some kin folks? Tell us about it, Janet."

Janet then handed the girls the books and read them the letters, pledging them again to secrecy, for she did not want to have the fifty girls talking over her private affairs. Like Janet, her friends were more interested in the surprising facts which she had to tell than in the good things in the box, though when she showed them the cake with its white frosting and unwrapped the pieces of chicken from the oiled paper, offering them their choice, there were some exclamations of pleasure. "That is a family worth having!" said Allie May. "No, Janet, I'd rather eat a good dinner and then when I am starved as usual after studying come to your feast."

"Whom are you going to invite, Janet?"

"I want to take something to your aunt, Lina, and to Miss Hilliard, and do you think it would be very piggy just to have this by ourselves? Some way, I don't want anybody much right now, and I

just had a party of our crowd last Saturday, you know."

"Suits me," laughed Allie May.

"It wouldn't be 'piggy' at all, Janet," asserted Lina. "I know how you must feel,—sort of dazed, aren't you?"

Janet nodded assent. "I'll let you know when, after I talk to Miss Hilliard. I am to see her after dinner."

But when Janet asked Miss Hilliard she was asked in turn if she had ever attended a late feast in the school. To this question Janet gave an honest reply. "Why, yes, Miss Hilliard."

"Then you were either invited without my knowledge by one of the older girls or attended a feast held without permission, though I should scarcely think that you knew it, Janet, and I shall not ask you now. No, to-morrow is Saturday, fortunately. It is cool and your box came right through. You may put the chicken in the refrigerator if you like. Have your party at any time on Saturday you like before evening."

There was so much of greater importance waiting to be discussed that Janet did not feel much disappointment. She did have one thought, though, expressed to Lina later. "Won't it be fine to go to a home where you do about as you please, the way it is at your house?"

But Lina reminded Janet that even there, late refreshments were not encouraged.

Miss Hilliard did not disappoint Janet in any other way. She was pleased that the note of explanation was so cordial. "I should say that a woman of some intelligence wrote that kind note," she said. "It must be a satisfaction to you, too, Janet, that you are named for your mother. Perhaps there will be some pictures of her in the Van Meter home. I know how you have wished to see some."

"Oh, there will be!" Janet exclaimed. "I had not thought of that!"

"We shall be expecting news direct from your uncle, then. When your grandmother first wrote to me, urging me to take you at a time when the only small girls were day scholars, she said that your mother was of a fine family in the east and that your father, her son, was ill when he brought you to her. Does this depress you, Janet?" Miss Hilliard had noticed that Janet seemed touched when she first showed her the books and names.

"Oh, no, Miss Hilliard. My father and mother are like beautiful dreams to me. This makes them a little more real,—that is all, and I felt a little 'teary' when I read my father's letter."

"I will try to find that old correspondence. I must have kept it, I think, though when you first came, we were expecting nothing like your grandmother's

sudden death. I understood that she was an invalid, but with some ailment that could be cured in time."

"And I have forgotten so much, except the fact that I did not know my own mother's name!"

"You should have told me, if that troubled you, Janet. I will ask Miss Marcy, who wrote about you to your grandmother, I think, what she knows about those early circumstances. Have you been happy here, Janet?"

"Oh, you know, Miss Hilliard, don't you, how I have been so glad for you and Miss Marcy and all my friends?"

"Yes, Janet. You have always been more than appreciative."

On the next day, Janet, Lina and Allie May made a lunch out of their party, by Miss Hilliard's suggestion, and it was almost as much fun as a late feast. As it happened, it was well that they had their fun early in the afternoon, for about three o'clock Janet was sent for. There was a gentleman waiting for her, the maid said.

CHAPTER III

THE UPSETTING PLANS OF UNCLE PIETER

ALTHOUGH so without family, Janet Eldon did not possess a lonely heart. She had the faculty of making friends, in spite of a little natural reserve and a manner more or less formal which she had unconsciously acquired by long residence in a school that fostered it. But that dropped away when she was with her intimate friends, for jolly school girls with a sense of humor can have many a merry time. If Janet was a little more mature in manner than some of the other girls of her age, it was to her advantage. Yet her background there had its limitations and it was a good thing for her that the Marcy family was so fond of her.

The family circle there was large. With Lina, Janet entered into all the vacation plans, athletic or domestic, as they might be. They lived in town, but the younger fry learned to ride, to row, to swim, to camp out a little or to motor together. Janet had some idea back in the recesses of her brain that the Marcys might take her to her uncle's home

after school was out. But that plan was not to be carried out. She was to see the Marcys again, but Janet was leaving this school sooner than she had thought. Some of the girls she never saw again, the inevitable separation taking place sooner than any of them anticipated.

The day was bright after the April showers of the preceding one. Janet went down to the double parlors of the building not knowing whom she would see, but she was rather relieved to see the lawyer by whose hands the modest fortune left her by her grandmother Eldon was administered. He was a man of medium height, with a somewhat serious but pleasant face, hair partly gray, keen eyes on the hazel order, and a manner of some dignity. Rising, he held out his hand to Janet.

"Miss Hilliard is not yet at liberty," he said, "but we can have a little conversation before she comes in. I have what I hope will prove to be pleasant news to you, certain communications from the representative of your mother's family, her oldest brother, your uncle Pieter Van Meter."

Janet smiled, as she sat down and the lawyer resumed his seat. "I am glad to see you, Mr. Conley. I have just had some word of the sort myself, a fine box from the home place and a letter from some lady there. She sent me two books of my mother's and I found out that I had an uncle."

"Well, well,—I am disappointed not to surprise you more. I thought that I should find some enthusiasm."

"Oh, there is! I am terribly thrilled over it!"

" 'Terribly thrilled', are you? Did the lady tell you that your uncle wants you to go as soon as possible to the Van Meter place in New York and make your home there?"

"No, Mr. Conley. Oh, how can I do that? I'll have to go to school some more, won't I?"

"I think that your uncle has some idea of having you taught privately."

"I wouldn't like that at all. I don't think that I will go,—yes, I will, too, for I must find out about my mother."

Mr. Conley smiled at Janet's independent speech and Janet realized as soon as she had spoken that she must do what her guardian said. Thank fortune her guardian was Miss Hilliard!

"Perhaps the lady who has written you is the one who will instruct you. But we shall see what Miss Hilliard has to say. Here she comes now," and Mr. Conley rose to meet Miss Hilliard, who came across the wide room from the door into the hall.

"I suppose, John, you have come to tell us about Pieter Van Meter," said Miss Hilliard, after she had shaken hands with the lawyer and he had placed a chair for her.

"Yes, Anna, that rather poetical name is the subject of my discourse."

Janet could scarcely suppress a mild giggle at that. Pieter and Meter did make a sort of rhyme.

Most of the conversation was now between Miss Hilliard and her old friend. Janet remembered what the older girls said, that Mr. Conley had wanted to marry Miss Hilliard and was waiting for her yet. It was very interesting. Sakes, they must be at least forty years old!

The letter from Pieter Van Meter was submitted to Miss Hilliard and passed on to Janet. It was brief, but clear, stating that the writer had recently traced the whereabouts of his niece, though he did not say how. He wanted to see her and to offer her a home where her mother, his sister, had lived. It was also hinted that he was Janet's natural guardian and that legal steps to that end could be taken in due time.

Janet was reading the letter and did not see the look that was exchanged between the lawyer and Miss Hilliard when Mr. Conley began to speak of that last point. But Miss Hilliard said firmly that nothing of the kind would be undertaken until Janet had been to the Van Meter place and made report about it and her uncle.

"First we must see, John," said she in a low

tone, glancing at Janet who was reading the letter and apparently absorbed in it, "whether Pieter Van Meter is a fit guardian for Janet. If he is, and will care for her little property and keep it together for her, very well. But I shall not hand over the responsibility just to be relieved of it. Everything is safe for Janet as long as you are in charge. Mr. Van Meter might be perfectly good and yet without judgment to take care of Janet. Janet, dear, you may be excused now, while I talk over business matters with Mr. Conley and arrange about your going, for I think that I shall let you drop the school work to go, as your uncle desires."

"Just a moment, Anna. Janet, I have made out a full report for you of your property and income, with the same items of interest and rent that I am giving, as usual, to your guardian. You are old enough now to know about these matters."

"Please, Mr. Conley," begged Janet. "I don't want to know anything about it. Will I have the same allowance as usual?"

"Yes," smiled the lawyer, in some amusement, "perhaps a little more, if you go to your uncle's and need some more frocks."

"Goody!" Janet looked at Miss Hilliard mischievously, then made her adieux as a properly trained pupil of the Hilliard school ought to do.

Miss Hilliard looked after her thoughtfully and Mr. Conley looked at Miss Hilliard. "Anna, you have had great success with that child," he said.

"Who can tell what the future will bring my girls?" she asked. "One can only try to implant high ideals and the Christian principles that will carry them on in any path. Janet is spirited and inclined to be independent, but she has fine ideas of justice and the rights of others, with considerable courage, too. I am hoping that she will find a loving home in this new place. Mr. Van Meter says nothing about the family. How would it do for you to call personally in a little while, after we hear Janet's reports about her people?"

"That is a good idea, Anna. There is always the excuse of business, in addition to showing an interest in Janet's welfare. Meanwhile, I shall quietly inquire about Mr. Van Meter. It is probably one of the old Dutch families with considerable standing, but we do not want to take too much for granted."

"Will it interrupt your affairs too much, John?"

"No. I often run up to New York and Albany. This letter is mailed at some small village, near the country place of the Van Meters, I suppose. How would you like to have me take Janet there, or to Albany, rather, where Van Meter says she will be met?"

"Thank you,—I shall go with Janet myself. It is not much of a trip and the assistant principal can have a chance to exercise her skill with the girls. I want to stop a day or two in New York."

The next two weeks were full of excitement for Janet, who went to classes as usual, but with much distraction of mind. They had written to her uncle. The date was set. Clothes were being put in order, and a new frock or two purchased, a task easy enough in the Philadelphia department stores. Janet's wardrobe was always sufficient, but she rather imagined that Miss Hilliard felt as she did, that Uncle Pieter should see her well provided for up to date.

"Won't it be lovely in the country, Janet, through May and June!" Allie May Loring exclaimed. "I just *envy* you. We'll be shut up to old lessons as usual, only for a few trips around and our picnics! Do write to us at least."

"Indeed I will. If only it isn't too lonesome there! Maybe I'll be just *perishing* to come back, after I find out all about my mother, you know. But I am crazy to see the place where she lived when she was a girl like me. If Uncle Pieter is nice, it will be all right. He did not say a word about his wife or anybody, so I have it all to find out. Perhaps I have some cousins, too. Won't it be fun if I have?"

"I hope that you will, if you want 'em," said Allie May, who sometimes thought that she had too many. But then, Janet never had had anybody.

"When I get married," said Janet, "if I ever do, I'm going to marry some one with a *large* family of brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and cousins and all the relations that you can have!"

"Great idea," laughed Lina Marcy.

At last the fateful day arrived. Janet, neat from top to toe and clad in the "darling spring suit," said goodbyes that turned out to be rather tearful in the end, to a host of girls assembled in the parlors and halls of the Hilliard school.

"Sure you come back next fall, Janet!"

"Come down for Commencement if your uncle will let you!"

"We'll miss you awfully in the spring fête, Janet!"

"That blue suit with the gray tones is too utterly sweet on you for anything, Janet."

"'Bye, Jannetje Van Meter Eldon. Give the Dutchman my best regards."

All this, to be sure, was before Miss Hilliard appeared from her room to take Janet to the taxi which was waiting outside. And funniest of all, several of the girls, who knew more about where Janet was going than the rest, took hands and sang softly around Janet:

"O Uncle Pieter,
Pieter Van Meter
Ain't no one sweeter,
Be sure to meet her,
Pieter Van Meter!"

Lips parted in merry smiles; girls were waving last goodbyes and kisses, as Janet was whirled away in the taxi beside Miss Hilliard. One tear, of which Janet had been scarcely aware, was now carefully wiped away to keep it from splashing upon the new suit. "Weren't the girls lovely, Miss Hilliard?" she asked. "I never was so surprised as when my little club gave me this sweet silk scarf that just goes with the suit, and the pair of hose that I have on."

"'Sweet'?" inquired Miss Hilliard.

"Well, it *is* fragrant, for I put a drop of violet on it before I started."

Last pictures of the merry girls floated in Janet's mind, with the appearance of the fine old brick building, almost flush with the street, its vines, over the large windows, just budding with spring green.

But the future was more interesting than the past. The very fact that Janet knew so little about what it might hold for her made it all the more fascinating to contemplate.

CHAPTER IV

HER MOTHER'S HOME

At Albany, when Miss Hilliard and Janet descended from the train which brought them from New York they started into the station but were met at once by an obsequious colored man in livery, who inquired if they were not the Van Meter guests and took their light bags. Inside, a fine-looking woman, in a roomy coat of gray and a close hat, seemed to have been watching for them, and came forward to meet them. "I am Mrs. Holt, Miss Hilliard. This is our cousin Janet, I suppose. I am glad to see you both. Allow me to present Mr. Andrew Van Meter, Miss Hilliard,—Cousin Janet. Now we are hoping that you will come to the farm with us, Miss Hilliard. My cousin Pieter begs pardon for not having urged it, but until your last note came, he did not feel like asking you to leave your girls."

"He would scarcely think that I could bring Janet myself, I know; but I occasionally run away for a few days. However, I have business in New York, and it is impossible for me to accept your kind in-

vitation. It is just as well for you to have Janet to yourselves, also. Perhaps Mr. Van Meter and I may meet some time to talk over matters relating to this little girl. She is anticipating this visit with much pleasure." Miss Hilliard emphasized "visit" a little.

All this was said before and after shaking hands with Mr. Andrew Van Meter and while he was exchanging a few words with Janet. Janet found him interesting. She had noticed that he rose with some difficulty from a seat near Mrs. Holt, when they first approached, and leaned a little upon a light cane in his left hand, while he extended his right. He was tall, thin, with a pale face and large, dark eyes. His nose was a little long for beauty, but he had a pleasant mouth, which smiled a little as he told Janet that he was her "Cousin Andy" and her Uncle Pieter's son.

"I am so glad to have some family," she informed him. "Did you ever see my mother?" she continued.

"Yes. You look like her."

But it was time to bid Miss Hilliard goodbye. She said that she had an errand in Albany, but would take the next train back to New York. Janet wondered what that errand was, but would not, of course, ask Miss Hilliard. Then, too, she was anxious to reach the end of her journey, and that anticipation, with the pleasant impression made by Mrs. Holt and her cousin, helped very much to keep Janet from any

regrets at saying another goodbye. "Write to me very soon, Janet," said Miss Hilliard, and Janet promised.

The car to which Janet was shown was a good one, but not new. It also bore evidences of April weather, though the day was a bright one. "There were some mud-holes, Janet, as you can see," said Mrs. Holt. "We could have directed you to come farther by train, somewhat nearer the Van Meter place, you know. But it seemed troublesome for Miss Hilliard to arrange the change, and we wanted you to see the country. A motor trip is much better for that. Our light truck is getting your baggage."

The three of them stepped within the car and waited for the colored chauffeur, who was attending to the matter of Janet's trunk and a suit-case with the driver of the light truck referred to. This waited not far away.

"Now you are wondering, I know, who I am and how we are all related," said Mrs. Holt. "I could not tell everything in that little note that I dashed off to put in the box. It is better to have your uncle Pieter explain, perhaps,—"

"If he will," inserted Mr. Andrew Van Meter.

"Yes, if he will," laughed Mrs. Holt. "You will not find your uncle very communicative, Janet, but he is very glad to have you here and it is due to him that you are 'discovered.' As I was about to say,

I am a distant cousin and I am supposed to be the housekeeper at the place. Really, old P'lina runs the house and I officiate at the show part of it, though we have very little company just now. Uncle Pieter is expecting me to coach you a little in your studies, and what I don't know Andrew here can tell you."

"Oh, I'm glad that it is to be the family that teaches me," said Janet with content. These were lovely people. But she did wonder what was the matter with Cousin Andy. Oh, of course,—he would have been in the war! He must have been injured,—poor Cousin Andy! She would not take any notice, of course. Some one would tell her.

Little more was said about personal affairs. Mrs. Holt was kept busy pointing out interesting spots, hills, places along the roads which they took. It was a much longer ride than Janet had supposed. The New York country was beautiful, she thought. She had been among the Pennsylvania hills and mountains, but never in New York except in the great city on her way to the seashore. Cousin Andy said little. There was a delicious little lunch which they ate on the way, and in reply to questions from Mrs. Holt—older people could ask questions, but never girls,—Janet chatted about her life at the school, her dearest friends and the funny farewell that she had had at the last. She did not, however, repeat the "crazy" verse sung about "Uncle Pieter."

Janet did not forget to speak with enthusiasm of the box and its contents. "I had never had one sent me in my life. Whoever baked that cake certainly can cook! The girls thought it just wonderful."

Mrs. Holt laughed. "That was old P'lina herself, I think. You will find her a bit difficult, perhaps, Janet, but you must remember that her 'bark' is considerably worse than her 'bite,' as they say."

What a funny name that was, P'lina. Janet wondered how they spelled it. Was it a Dutch name, too?

In silence they drove into the drive of the Van Meter place. A grove of trees in early spring beginnings of foliage had impeded the view of it until they were almost at the entrance. Janet sat forward eagerly to look.

It was not different from much of the country which she had already seen, with its sweep of undulating valley and background of hills. It was really a farm, then; but the land immediately surrounding the house was laid out formally for beauty. The house stood behind some great oak and elm trees upon an elevation which was terraced. Behind it were hills. Janet wondered if the Catskill mountains could be seen from the house. She had forgotten those, which she had seen from the train. She was not far from Rip Van Winkle country anyhow.

"This is all different from when your mother was here," Cousin Andy voluntered. "Father has made all this improvement in and about the house, and the whole front of it is new. The old Dutch house still stands, though."

"Yes," said Mrs. Holt, "and if you like, you may have the room that was your mother's."

"Oh, I should like that above all things!"

"I wouldn't give her that one, Diana," said Andrew. "It may not turn out as well as she thinks."

"We shall see," returned Mrs. Holt, and Janet wondered why Cousin Andy had said that.

"Has the 'old Dutch house' stood since 'way back in 'Knickerbocker' times?" asked Janet, looking curiously at the more modern front, made in "Dutch Colonial" style, with its porch and two high-backed benches one on each side. The house, in front of which the car now stopped, was of red brick, its woodwork, in entrance and windows, painted white.

Janet had a slight feeling of disappointment to know that the place had been so modernized, but common sense told her that it would be in all probability much more comfortable. How big it was!

Andrew Van Meter answered Janet's question, as he slowly left the car and stood leaning on his cane and stretching one hand to assist Mrs. Holt and Janet. "The original house was burned by the Indians," he said. "All this land was given by grant

from the English government, back in about sixteen hundred and seventy, to one of our ancestors, not a Van Meter, however, if I remember correctly. It will please Father if you care to ask him all about it. He will show you what we have on the early history of New York and of our particular family."

"I will ask him," said Janet, whose study of American history was recent.

Next, there she was inside of the big room, where a fire burned brightly and a tall, stooped man rose from an armchair to meet her. It was Uncle Pieter. Why, he must have been ever so much older than her mother! His hair was quite white, though his face did not look so old.

Mr. Van Meter senior, took Janet's hand and shook it limply a little. "I am glad that you are here," he said. "I expect it to be your home from now on. While your mother had her share of the estate, her daughter has some rights in the home of her ancestors."

Janet's uncle was looking at her rather tensely, while he spoke in a deliberate way, as if he had thought beforehand what he intended to say. "You look like your mother," he added, dropping her hand. "What room has been made ready for her, Diana?"

"She may have either a room in the new part of the house, or her mother's room in the old part," returned Mrs. Holt.

"I should prefer my mother's room," timidly Janet offered.

"Show her both of them," said Pieter Van Meter. "You will be more comfortable in this part, I should say."

With this comment, Uncle Pieter resumed his seat, picking up the paper which he had been reading, and apparently dismissing the matter, Janet as well. But Mrs. Holt beckoned Janet to follow her.

Janet Eldon's feelings were indescribable, as Diana Holt conducted her over the house of her forefathers. She kept thinking, "This place is where my mother lived when she was a girl like me!"

The new part was large and beautiful, the whole arrangement a little unusual. In order to preserve the front and appearance of the old house, the new building was attached to it in such a way that it faced a sort of court, which it helped to form.

Widely the new "Dutch Colonial" stretched across, facing the main road, but at a great distance from it. There were large rooms here, parlors, library and hall downstairs, and suites of smaller rooms upstairs for Mr. Van Meter and his son.

At the left, an extension, which contained a large dining-room and kitchen downstairs, and bedrooms upstairs, ran back for some distance, to connect at its right by corridors only with the old house, which thus formed the third side of the court and in width

equalled the new front; for even in its time the old Van Meter home had been more or less imposing, the connecting corridors now supplying the difference in extent. By this arrangement the old house received almost as much light in all its rooms as of yore. Beautiful trees and a pergola with a concrete floor, rustic seats and a swing were at the right of the court and the house walls, which made the court more or less retired. Wings that had been built upon the old house with the growth of the family had been removed and stood as small buildings for stores, some distance back from the now fairly symmetrical home.

"John says that the only reason your uncle Pieter did not take down the old house was that he did not want to disturb the 'ha'nts,' " said Mrs. Holt, with a slight laugh of amusement. "But that can not be true, for Pieter took great pains to fix the old kitchen in the most accurate representation of an old colonial kitchen, and he has left some old paintings, which would grace the new parlors very well, for the old ones, just because they always hung there. He made quite a show place of it at first, P'lina tells me."

"It's a real 'haunted house,' then?" Janet inquired. as they stepped from a rear door of the new part to the green spaces of the court. With interest she looked at the well preserved front of the aged dwell-

ing, approached by a walk of flat stones sunk in the turf. It was all very quaint and beautiful, Janet thought.

"Yes, it has the reputation of being haunted, Janet, but of course that is all nonsense. However, if you are timid, you'd better stay in the new part."

"I'd love to have it haunted by my mother," smiled Janet. "She would make a lovely ghost, I'm sure."

"She would," said Mrs. Holt, unlocking the front door. "I thought that it would interest you more to enter here, Janet. Step over the threshold, now, where all your ancestors before you have trod! No, —the first house was burned by Indians. But this has stood for many a long year."

Thoughtfully Janet entered the door and stood looking about the central hall. There they had placed the old spinning wheel. The antlers of a large deer's head stretched from the wall above her.

As they went from room to room, Janet was almost confused. There were the big fireplaces. Some of them, Mrs. Holt explained, had been boarded up and stoves used, but these Mr. Van Meter had restored to their original appearance, with old andirons, found in the attic, and other ancient appurtenances, like the queer old leather bellows, used to create a blaze, and the long-handled brass warming-pan that stood, or hung, in a corner of the kitchen. Old dishes, the cranes, and old iron kettles, even an old

gun, hung above the plain mantel, were a revelation of the antique to Janet. She could scarcely have lived in Philadelphia without knowing something about such things, but she had never had any personal interest before. Although she said little, Mrs. Holt saw that her young companion was interested.

"Friends from New York, Albany and Troy often visit us, Janet, and are brought here to admire. We sometimes have a house full in the summer."

"Who is John, Cousin Diana?" asked Janet suddenly, "John that spoke of the 'ha'nts'?"

"Oh, yes. I haven't told you about my son, Janet. He will be here in a few days, for his spring vacation begins, late this year, on account of a contagious disease that some of them had, and the boys were not allowed to leave. He was christened Jan, but prefers to be called John."

"I wouldn't," said Janet. "From now on, I'm going to spell my name with two n's.'

"You think so now," said Mrs. Holt with an indulgent smile.

From room to room they went, Mrs. Holt pointing out the old highboys, claw-footed mahoghany tables and desks, and telling Janet whose were the faces in the pictures upon the walls. At last they went up the beautiful old staircase, through bedrooms made comfortable with modern springs upon the old four

posters, and Mrs. Holt stopped before one of the doors, drawing a key from her pocket.

"This, Janet, is your mother's room. Your uncle gave direction to have it kept locked and to permit no one to enter on any tour of inspection. So you may be sure that it has not been looked at with curious eyes. Only P'lina and I are ever supposed to enter it, though I think that your uncle has a key, and it is possible that he comes in occasionally.

"You see how this corridor runs over to the new part, where my bedroom opens directly upon the hall there. Old P'lina sleeps near you, if you decide to take this room. You will see a picture of your mother that will give you great pleasure, I think, and I'm leaving you alone now, child,—to go in by yourself. You will find me in my bedroom for a while, but if you want to stay here, I will see that you are called for supper. It will be late, I think. We have supper, not dinner, at night, except when we have guests. May you be happy, my dear, to find your mother's room at last."

CHAPTER V

THE "HAUNTED CHAMBER"

JANET entered the room once occupied by her mother and closed the door. Soberly she stood still and looked about. Facing her, upon the wall, there hung a face so like the one which she daily saw in her mirror that she had no difficulty in recognizing it as her mother. Yet she realized now that in certain features she did resemble her father, as "Gramma" Eldon had insisted. That was one thing that Janet remembered out of the confused memories of her early childhood.

The attractive mouth smiled down upon Janet. Fair hair like her daughter's crowned the sensitive face. The dress was white, lacy about bare neck and arms. A necklace of pearls furnished adornment. "Why, how young you look, Mother," said Janet aloud. She was surprised. Mothers were old.

Glancing down at a graceful little table which stood under the picture, Janet saw a sheet of note paper. Some one, probably Cousin Diana, had written a message upon it.

"This is Jannet at nineteeen, shortly before she was married. The gown is one that she wore at a recital where she 'sang like an angel', according to your father. Your mother lived in New York, studying voice, for a year. Your grandfather took an apartment there and your grandmother died there. Then they came back here, your uncle's family moved in, and your mother was married from here. She met your father in New York."

Some girls might have taken an immediate inventory of everything. Not so Janet. A little feeling of reverence and hesitation held her. She sat down in a chair near the table to think and to grow familiar with her mother's face. Then she noted a small silver vase of spring violets on top of a dark, old-fashioned highboy. She jumped up and put the violets beneath her mother's picture on the table. "I think that I shall keep some flowers there for you, Mother," she said.

Presently other things in the room challenged her attention. The dark highboy was a handsome piece of furniture. She slowly pulled out one of its curved drawers,—empty. Her own clothes could be put here, where that other Jannet's clothing was. One by one, Janet opened the drawers. In the bottom one a few unmounted photographs lay loosely. Eagerly Janet picked them up. Good! They were pictures of the place, the old house as it was,—and oh, this

must be her mother and father! Why, did they have snap-shots *then?*

Of course they had snap-shots fifteen years or so ago! She must be crazy to think that her mother and father belonged to the antiques! What a bright, laughing face it was! They were hand in hand, the two young people, her mother in her wedding veil, her father so handsome in his wedding attire. Some one had snapped them outdoors, and her mother was in the act of curtseying, her arm stretched to her young husband, who held his wife's hand and bowed also, looking at his bride instead of at the camera.

Janet could imagine the scene, with a crowd of merry guests looking on. She looked from the wall picture to the photograph, and to the picture again. It must be a good painting, then, true to life. But she would mount that little picture of her father and mother and have it in sight. She laid it carefully upon the table and went to examine a beautiful desk that stood at no great distance from the fireplace. How wonderful to have such a fireplace in her own room! And suppose that this was one of the desks with secret drawers! Why, she would not miss staying here for any comfort that the newer building might offer. That dear little rocking chair might have been used for years by her mother.

After a tour of the room and a look out of its two windows, one of which opened upon a balcony

that stretched away the length of the house, Janet again sat down near the table and looked up at the picture above, when the sudden opening of her door startled her.

A straight, angular woman, with dark hair gathered into a little knot on top of her head, stalked into the room with a large comforter in her arms. She wore spectacles, but as they were drooping upon her nose Janet thought that they were not of much use. A woolen dress under an enveloping gingham apron and shoes whose tops were hidden by the dress which came to her ankles, completed the picture.

She did not see Janet until she was well into the room, and started back a little. "Miss Jannet!" she exclaimed under her breath. Then she recovered herself and stalked to the bed to lay the comforter and a blanket, which it had concealed from view, across the foot. "You're here, then," she continued. "You look like your ma. You will need some extra covers to-night. It's turning colder now. I'll have a fire made in the fireplace. Your ma liked this room because she could have one. But I wouldn't sleep here for anything."

"Why?" Janet asked.

"The room is ha'nted," replied the woman, leaving the room in the same stiff way, without another word.

Janet's rather sober face relaxed into a broad

smile. This must be "Old P'lina!" Later Janet was to find out that the name was Paulina, Paulina Stout.

But "ha'nted," or not "ha'nted," the room was fascinating. It was hers. No other room in the house could seem like that. What had Uncle Pieter said about her "having some rights in the home of her ancestors?" This should be one of them, then, to occupy her mother's room.

Supper was served in due time. The dining-room seemed large for the size of the present family, but Janet understood from what Mrs. Holt had told her that there was often considerable entertainment of guests. She wondered, for she could not imagine Uncle Pieter in the role of affable host. He appeared to be preoccupied and joined little in the conversation, which was largely between Cousin Diana and Cousin Andy. Once he asked Mrs. Holt when her mother would be back, and inquired about John's coming. So Cousin Di had a mother who made her home there, too.

Janet was wondering about many things, but she remembered Miss Hilliard's caution, not to be in too much of a hurry to find out everything. "It will take you a little while to become adjusted to the new place and the new people, Janet," she had said. "One learns about people slowly sometimes. Be patient."

Janet knew that it was not her nature to be patient.

Perhaps no one is patient by nature. Patience is a grace to be cultivated. Janet's consideration for others, nevertheless, kept her from blundering into questions or comments that were not proper. A sense of propriety was almost inherent with her and served her well in this experience among strangers.

Uncle Pieter disappeared soon after the meal. Andrew, Diana and Janet visited for a little while, then Mrs. Holt accompanied Janet, by way of the corridors this time, to the door of her room. She peeped in at the glowing fire that burned behind a modern wire screen, put there for safety. "Better let the fire die down, after you toast your toes a little, Janet. Shall I look in a little later? Are you lonesome?"

"Oh, no. I'll go to bed pretty soon. I love that old four-poster!"

"You would not like it if it had the old ropes that sagged. But there are some good modern springs and a fine mattress. Where your uncle has gotten all the money that he has spent on this place is a mystery to me. But I was delighted to be asked here. I had not seen the place since I visited your mother when we were girls. You will find some paper in your desk. That is the famous desk with the secret drawers, Janet."

"Really? I did not know if I might open it or not, though the key is there."

"Everything here is for you to use. Your uncle gave me directions to that effect. He said that you are to have your mother's furniture."

"How good of him."

"Perhaps not. Why should you not have it?"

Janet looked a little wonderingly at her cousin. Perhaps that was so. Unless Uncle Pieter had bought it or arranged to have it when the estate was divided, it would be hers.

How good it was to sit quietly in the room, writing a few of the chief events to Miss Hilliard, while the fire began to die down and everything grew quiet. She did not mind a few April frogs that performed for her benefit somewhere in the neighborhood. The country was nice, and she was so sleepy. She could not quite finish the letter, but hurried to undress before the fire should go out, and climbed into the comfortable, soft bed, first spreading on the extra blanket. On finding it very chilly when she opened the window, she also spread wide the dainty blue and white comforter, letting the bottom edge of it hang over the foot of the bed instead of tucking it in. Even then it came up under her chin. In sweet contentment Janet said her prayers in her mother's room and fell asleep.

Later a thunderstorm, or series of storms came up. Janet roused enough to put down her win-

dows, sufficiently to prevent the rain's beating in. Then she went to sleep again.

Suddenly Janet wakened. She could hear the rain pouring again. But there was a movement. Slowly the comforter began to slide from her. How strange! The cold chills began to play up and down Janet's spine. Could there be a burglar? She lay still, her face in the pillow.

Now more swiftly the cover was drawn off. It was gone. A flash of lightning, dimly lighting the room from under the shades and curtains of the window, disclosed a moving form at the foot of the bed. Janet, who had lifted her head to see, again pressed her face into the pillow. She listened for the opening of the door, but there was no sound from that direction.

A faint noise somewhere, like the little click of a latch, perhaps,—and Janet lay still for a long time, hearing nothing but the rain and the boom of distant thunder. Janet remembered that she had slid fast a small, curious brass bolt at the door when she went to bed. How could any one enter there? Possibly there was some other entrance, but she had not noticed any.

It was some time before Janet dared to sit up in bed and finally to slip from under the covers and run to where the electric button was. Flash! On

came the light and Janet was at the door, ready to run if there were any menacing presence in the room. *The bolt was still* in position, as she had left it when locking up!

On the chair by the bed was her bath robe; beneath lay her slippers. These all she donned and went to the windows. They were still only a trifle raised, and now Janet threw them up as high as they would go. No one had entered there, though the curious little balcony, with vines beginning to leaf out, shone wet with the rain and the light from Janet's room.

There were two doors besides the one which led into the hall. Of these two, one opened into a closet, the other into a bathroom. Janet did not know whether that had been there in the old days or not but she fancied that it might have dated back to her mother's time. After her uncle's brief talk at supper about the old Dutch homes and habits and the early days of New York history, Janet was beginning to feel as if she were a part of a long line, indeed, and her curiosity was aroused about all these little details.

She opened the closet door. There hung her dresses. Her hats were upon the shelf. She reached back to the wall. No door there. The bathroom, blue and white and prettily tiled, offered no solution to the mysterious visitor who had carried off the comforter.

"No ghost," said Janet to herself, "could carry off a thick blue comforter!" But it *was* funny,—queer. Had the comforter been anywhere in the room, she might have thought it a dream. Yet she certainly did not dream those cold chills, or that odd feeling when slowly the cover was drawn off. But at least the intruder, ghost or not, had not harmed her in any way.

Little birds began to sing outside and a gray dawn was breaking. Janet crept back into bed, refreshed by the air from the wide open windows. At once she fell asleep, not to waken till Paulina rapped loudly on her door to waken her in time for breakfast.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW COUSIN

THE April morning was fresh and clear. Janet found her Cousin Andrew waiting for the rest and reading quietly in the large living room. "Good morning, Janet," said he. "Did you sleep well in your new quarters?"

"I haven't quite grown accustomed to them yet," replied Janet, who had decided not to mention her fright of the night before, "but I thought that I would never waken this morning. Some one had to call me twice."

"The storm was disturbing," replied Andrew. "You can see what a wreck I am, Janet. It is a good thing that Jan is coming to brighten life here for you. He wrote to me and asked me to 'beg off on school' for him, to my father."

Janet looked into her cousin's amused eyes, but she was thinking of what he said about his being a 'wreck'. "You were in the war, weren't you, Cousin Andy?"

"Yes,—shell-shocked, shot up in a few places that

seem to do as much damage as possible. But at that I'm better off than thousands of the boys, forgotten in the hospitals now." Andrew's voice was a little bitter. "Don't ask me to tell you about it, child. It's better for me to do the forgetting. I'm thirty years old, and I'm older than my father."

"You don't look it," smiled Janet engagingly. "I think that you are very nice."

The little remark pleased Andrew. "Well, you are a nice little pal, then. We'll be friends."

"Yes indeed. Did you know my mother?"

"Yes, Janet, but not very well." Andrew looked sober. "She was a beautiful and charming girl, but she did not care for my father. He was so much older, for one thing, and I fancy that she thought him dictatorial. We did not live here when she grew up. My father married and lived in Albany, where my brothers and sisters and I were born."

This again was news to Janet, who asked about these cousins. But only a sister with one daughter was living. They were abroad, but might come to the farm for the summer.

"Where are the Van Meters buried?" asked Janet.

"Why do you want to know that?" asked Andrew in his turn. "You want only bright things here."

"I just thought that I might take some flowers to my mother's grave," she replied. "That was all,—

just once, perhaps, to show that I am glad to know about her."

"Why, little cousin, we knew nothing about it and supposed that she is buried by your father. Father took over the place to relieve grandfather. Your mother's things were all here, but she did not send for them and was coming to visit that summer after you were born. Then we heard that you all had been wiped out in an epidemic of some sort, like the 'flu' that we had during the war. It was past before we knew."

Janet, surprised, was about to tell her cousin about her father and the brief story that she knew, but Uncle Pieter had silently entered and was standing beside her, saying, "Come, no sad memories. Let us have some of Paulina's griddle cakes."

Janet followed her uncle in silence, wondering at his jovial tone, for it was not in harmony with his usual style. He was just a little queer. No wonder that her mother did not like him very well. But he was being good to her. She must remember that. Griddle cakes, bacon and the sweet maple syrup were very good indeed. Janet noticed that as they all left the table Paulina handed Mrs. Holt a note, a folded scrap of paper, which she read with a frown. Paulina had gone back to the kitchen without a smile to relieve her rather dour, defensive expression.

"Excuse me, Janet," said Mrs. Holt. "Amuse

yourself in any way you like for I have to see P'lina about something."

"I have plenty of fun ahead of me, Cousin Di. I'm going through that old desk of Mother's to see if I can find a secret drawer or two."

"You will," Mrs. Holt asserted.

But that morning Janet found nothing particularly exciting. The "secret" drawers were too easily found, she thought. There were some papers, however, though none of any importance. A package of letters from her father to her mother she hesitated to read and saved it as possible at a future time. She read a little in some of her mother's books and then started outdoors in her hiking costume, for she wanted to see the farm.

All that day she amused herself with investigations on a small scale, within and without. The library was a pleasant place, and when she was sure that Uncle Pieter and Cousin Andrew were not there, she curled up to read Uncle Pieter's books. There were copies of *Little Men* and *Little Women* which she took down to read for the third or fourth time in her short life. Perhaps they had belonged to Uncle Pieter's daughter. She replaced them till the next day, when just before supper she heard sounds of greetings in the hall.

"H'lo, Mom! It's great to get home again!" Janet heard as she started toward the living room,

where they were all supposed to meet before going to meals.

"How's the bum back, Uncle Andy?" continued the boyish voice. "How do you do, Uncle Pieter?" Jan, like Janet, called Mr. Van Meter by that familiar expression.

The murmur of voices grew to distinct speech as Janet drew nearer and she saw a friendly looking boy considerably taller than herself standing in the doorway to talk to the rest of the family who had apparently just entered. "Here's another," he cried, glancing around and seeing Janet. He drew back and ushered her inside as, presumably, he had ushered the rest. "I know that this must be my cousin Janet, so let's shake hands."

At another time Janet would not have found her cousin Jan so occupying the center of the picture and doing so much talking. But he seemed to be a little excited over his arrival and reception. Paulina passed through, having brought something to the table in the room. Janet saw her looking at Jan with a glance and expression as enigmatic as the Mona Lisa smile. "What is the matter with P'lina?" asked shrewd Cousin Andy, but no one replied.

During the meal Janet gained a good deal of information about Jan and his doings from the conversation. Mr. Pieter Van Meter questioned the

lad about his school, but not as one who had any responsibility about the matter. Obviously, Cousin Diana and her son were in the family circle because of her services and the atmosphere of home which her pleasant personality created. She was a charming hostess, as Janet found later when company came to the old place.

"I did not see a car drive in when you came," said Janet to Jan when they settled down for a visit together in the library.

"No, I came over from another place where a friend of mine lives. I came on one of their horses, and I dressed first before I appeared to the family."

"Is it so that you have a workshop and everything, back where I room?"

"Are you rooming in the old part, then? Why, yes, I have a room there, too, and they let me use part of the attic sometimes, a sort of den there. I do radio stuff and I like everything about electricity. Uncle Pieter did not think much of it at first; but when I fixed the electric bells and got things all right when fuses burned out, and a few other things, he changed his mind about it. I'm really scarcely related at all. Isn't he a queer old—fellow? I was going to use some slang, but I'd better keep that for school."

Janet favored Jan with an understanding glance.

"It's very 'expressive,' I've heard Miss Hilliard say, but she corrects us when we use it. Do you want me to call you John or Jan?"

The boy hesitated. "I used to despise that old Dutch name," he said, "but if you are Jannet, I'll be Jan while I'm here. I'm trying to get permission to stay on instead of going back to school. Uncle Pieter doesn't interfere, only about that, but if I can help about the place a little it will be more fun, and you and I could ride everywhere. Wouldn't you like that?"

"I should think I would!"

"Well, all I ask is that you get Uncle Pieter to liking you a whole lot. I believe he does."

"He couldn't. He only knows me a very little, you see."

"Do you think that a person would have to know you a long while first? I always know whom I'm going to like. They are short of help, the farmer at the tenant house told me, so I'm going to risk it, and ask Uncle Pieter if I can't turn farmer. There are a lot of things to be done, about the trees in the orchard and the stock, for instance, that a boy can do."

"You like farming as well as electricity, then."

"Some of it."

Jan was not fair like Jannet, for he had the dark hair and gray eyes of his mother in a face more

"square," as Jannet thought of it. They were to be Jan and Jannet, then. That would be fun. Jannet next asked if there were other boys and girls in the neighborhood and was told of Jan's friends on the neighboring farm, a girl and two boys.

"How old are you, Jannet?" Jan asked frankly.

"Fourteen."

"Well, that is how old Nell Clyde is. I'm fifteen and Chick is almost sixteen. He's my friend. Then there's Tom. He's pretty nearly seventeen, I guess. He's a year older than Chick anyway."

This was fine. Jannet, who knew almost no boys at all, was laughing at the very ordinary nickname. How funny boys were. "What is Chick's right name?" she asked.

"John. That is one reason why it doesn't do at all for us to go by our right names. I'm sometimes one thing and sometimes another at school. Chick calls me 'Hunks,' for 'hunks of cheese'."

"That *is* funny," said Jannet. "But tell me, Jan, old P'lina says that my room is haunted, and your mother said that you said so, too, though I imagined that you said it in fun."

Jan looked at Jannet with a great assumption of seriousness. "Old P'lina is always right, Jannet. This is a 'haunted house,' as the natives say. We even have a sort of Dutch Banshee that howls around sometimes."

"Tell me some more. Do the ghosts walk at night, especially when there is a storm?"

Jan looked curiously at Jannet. "That sounds as if you heard something," said he. "Yes, somebody comes down some invisible stairs; you can hear slow footsteps, you know. Maybe something drops, but there is *nobody there!*" Jan made big eyes at Jannet, who grinned delightedly.

"Or you hear low singing, or distant violin music."

"That would be your radio."

"Old P'lina says not. She's been here ages and sometimes I think that she is a little queer in the upper story, but she is good to me at that."

"I don't think that she likes me," said Jannet. "But what else does the ghost do, and who is the ghost anyway?"

"Ask P'lina. You'd better say 'ghosts.' For all I know, there are more than one."

"Sakes! And I've got the haunted room, too!"

"Are you easily scared?"

"No. But I'm going to have a flashlight after this."

"After what?"

"Oh, nothing, just because of the ghosts. If I flashed my light on real quick, I might see one."

"Well, call me if you do. I'd love to see one. I'll broadcast him."

Jannet thought that so funny, that Uncle Pieter

himself looked in to see what the fun was about. "Jan wants to broadcast a ghost," she explained, but Uncle Pieter did not smile. "Remember that ghosts are supposed to be spirits of the dead," he said, going on his way through the hall.

Jan made a face, turning to Jannet with lifted shoulders. "Excuse me for livin'," he remarked. "I'd like to tell Uncle Pieter that ghosts are often troubled by remorse."

"Not any of ours," quickly said Jannet. "Don't go to getting me scared really and truly, Jan!" But afterwards, when Jannet thought of Jan's remarks, she wondered why he wanted to mention "remorse" to Uncle Pieter. Why hadn't she asked Jan? She would at the first opportunity, if she didn't forget it.

CHAPTER VII

TWO NEW MYSTERIES

THERE was some secret between Jan and Old P'lina, Jannet could see, but it was scarcely polite to intercept their glances. Jannet told herself that she must mind her own affairs strictly. Yet it was hard to do it in this environment. Jannet felt that Jan was joking considerably when he talked of the ghosts of the old house, but Paulina wasn't she was sure. For some strange reason, nevertheless, Jannet grew more and more fond of her pretty, quaint room. Perhaps the face upon the wall accounted for that. In that sweet presence nothing would harm Jannet, yet Jannet was enough of a little girl not to be entirely unshaken by the stories, especially when remembering the blue comforter. It had never appeared again. Paulina did not inquire about it and Jannet did not mention it to Paulina.

The April days were warm, though in this climate they are often very cool indeed. It could not last, Jan said, but they would make the most of it. Forsaking Chick and his other friends, Jan devoted him-

self to taking Jannet riding over the farm and all about the country. One would have thought that he owned it all, so anxious was he to impress Jannet favorably.

The Clydes came over to meet Jannet, who now always used the two n's in her name. She was "as Dutch as kraut," Jan told her, and on the land of her ancestors. With this she was quite content. She liked Nell Clyde and felt a little shy with the two boys, but no more so than they felt with the girl from the Philadelphia school.

A cruel fate was taking Chick back to school after the short Spring vacation, but Jan, though with no grounds that Jannet could see, still hoped to escape. He introduced Jannet as his twin, Jannetje Jan, and they all had several rides together on the roads near home. As Nell was being tutored at home, Jannet expected to have her companionship after the boys had gone back to school. Tom, a little older, was not always with the rest, but all the boys were often in Jan's shop, not far enough from Jannet's room to prevent her hearing the sounds of their conversation and laughter.

No one as yet suggested that it was time for Jannet to go on with her lessons, and Jannet was enjoying her rest far too much to make any inquiry concerning them. At odd times she browsed among her uncle's books and it was when she opened one

of them that she made a discovery. A little torn strip of paper fell out of the book from where it might have been used as a book-mark by some one.

Idly Jannet looked at the bit of paper which she held in her hand still, though turning the pages of the book to see whether it looked interesting or not. But seeing the name "Jannet" in full, she laid aside the book and examined the paper more closely.

It was part of a letter, or note, she decided. Perhaps some one had picked the scrap from a waste paper basket at hand and used it as a marker without looking at it. Surely,—well, how odd! "Please, *please*, Pieter, help me find them," it said. "I have" —here the paper was torn, but below in the irregular places were the words "money" and "gone." Then below, where one could see through the edge, torn to a gauzy film, the signature, "Jannet," was plain.

"It is part of a letter from my mother to Uncle Pieter," thought Jannet. "What does it mean?"

Jannet did not feel like reading now. Taking the scrap of paper with her, she walked from the library to the hall, down the hall to the outer door, across a tiny path between tulip beds to the old door with its queer knocker. Soon she was in her room and at the desk. It was scarcely worth while to compare the writing with that of her mother, so sure was she that this was a message from her mother, but she went through the form.

It was raining again. Her search of the desk had been so casual and hurried before that this would be a good time to devote to it, with greater interest, too, because less distracted by the newness of everything as at first. Jannet admired the rich beauty of the desk, although she did not know that it was of the Chippendale design, with considerable carving, and that it had been made for an earlier ancestor than her mother.

For several hours Jannet opened and closed "secret" drawers which she had found previously, and read carefully whatever of writing she found in them. Quickly she learned to recognize her mother's hand. She was scarcely old enough to appreciate the sentiment attaching to old programs and faded flowers, but she collected them thoughtfully and put all such mementos together.

The bundle of letters she untied, to look at the addresses. These were the love letters, of course; but between the letters she found a few pages of a diary, quickly recognized by the date at the head and the accounts that followed. In a moment she was bending over it with deep interest. One day's account recorded what had been said of her mother's singing at a private recital, and expressed the hope of a future as a singer. Another, kept by way of contrast, perhaps, told, with some reserve even to a personal diary, of her engagement and her lover.

Under a date not long before her marriage, Jannet Van Meter had written very fully and regretfully of a loss. "I have searched everywhere. I can not think that any one could have taken my pearls, yet where *are* they? I put them in my desk, in the most secret of its drawers. I have not worn them since, and they are gone! It is a great loss in money as well. Father made some sacrifices to raise the sum necessary for my pearls,—but he *would* do it. I was to have them, and Pieter did not like it, of course. He just smiled when I told him that I had lost them and would not show the least interest in discussing what might have become of them, nor would he help me hunt. 'If they're gone, they're gone,' said he, shrugging his shoulders. Sometimes I've almost thought,—but no, I'll not even write such an unworthy suspicion.

"I had thought that it would be safe for us to have the pearls, because if we ever need money very much after we are married,—you and I really are going to be married, Douglas boy,—we could sell a pearl or two, or the whole necklace. Perhaps I shall find them yet. I'll never give it up, not, at least, till I am too far away to hunt. I shall give a thorough going over to every place to-morrow.

"It is too bad that 'Mother' Eldon can't come on for the wedding. And we have to go right through to the far West without stopping off because Douglas

must get to his work. But someway, I imagine from her letter that she is not real happy about her boy's getting married at all. Perhaps it is just as well for her to get used to the idea before we meet, though Douglas is just silly enough to say that she will love me when she sees me and that she couldn't help it. Well, if he loves me, that is enough for me."

The last page contained a brief account of wedding preparations. No mention was made of the pearls. "There is no use in trying to write it all down," Jannetje Van Meter had written at the close. "And to write of my thoughts and feelings about this change in my life, or about us, I simply couldn't. I believe that I will tear up my diary, anyhow! This is *Finis.*"

Jannet Eldon was smiling as she finished. Her mother was just a real girl, after all. She hadn't lived to be very old. How Jannet wished that she had not burned the diary. Where had she gotten the impression that her mother would be buried among the Van Meters? Why, of course, it would be natural, if she had died before her husband. But if she had been carried off in an epidemic, that would be the reason why her grave would be out West. Then "Gramma" would want her son buried in the Eldon lot. That was it. Jannet had once visited that spot, in company with Miss Hilliard. There was no mystery there; besides, her father and mother

were together now, wherever, apart, the worn-out bodies were. One of the lovely things about Miss Hilliard was that she had made the other world so real to Jannet.

Suddenly Jannet rose and went to one of the drawers of the highboy in which her own treasures now reposed. Rummaging through things not yet well sorted, Jannet found a note book and drew out several sheets of writing paper pinned together. True to her promise, Miss Hilliard had looked up past correspondence, which recalled facts that she had forgotten. But she and Jannet had not had time to go over it very thoroughly.

Jannet recalled dimly having labored over a few lines to her grandmother, because she "ought to," One of the teachers helped her. Here was the reply, or part of it:

"I was pleased that you wrote me yourself. Be a good child. I hope to be better soon and to have you at home for your next vacation. So some of the girls have mothers and you want to know about yours? I will tell you all that I know when I feel stronger. The nurse is writing for me. I never saw your mother and the only letters I have had from her were destroyed by mistake. They were to stop on their way to New York the summer after you were born. Your father took all your mother's photographs with him and what became of them I

do not know. He came East so suddenly, half delirious, saying that your mother had died.

"It was very fortunate that I found you both. I had moved, writing and telegraphing, but from what he said in his delirium he must have moved too. He was on his way to the old home, when providentially I took the same train from a business trip to a town near by. I took you both from the train and to a hospital in the nearest place, a hospital of which I happened to know. Both of you were ill for weeks and after it was all over and I could think of sending for any of your father's things, it was too late. No one seemed to know anything. He was young, just starting in business, and I was too worn out to care. They were, or had been living in a furnished apartment. Your father after I found him never had been himself, only to say, 'She is dead.'

"I wrote to your mother's people several times, but never received a reply. If they had so little interest, I was only too glad to have my boy's little girl to myself. 'Gramma' loves you dearly, and when I get well, we shall have some good times."

This letter was probably read to Jannet at the time, but she could scarcely recall it. Even there, her grandmother had not mentioned names, and Miss Hilliard said that the Eldon family Bible sent to Jannet had no record entered of her father's marriage.

The letters, with the pages of the diary between them, Jannet put back in their drawer and laid this letter, with the scrap from the book, with them. That scrap must refer to the loss of the pearls, yet why should her mother *write* to her uncle about it? It was puzzling.

Now to find that "most secret drawer." Jannet had all sorts of fancies about how to find secret drawers. There was one worn spot, with a narrow piece of yielding wood, in a groove by a little ridge of the mahogany. Jannet rubbed the worn place, thinking of Aladdin's lamp, but nothing happened. Then she noticed a tiny glint of brass by the ridge and pressed it with the point of her knife. There! a drawer, sticking a little, began to move out. Jannet inserted her fingers and pulled gently, afraid of breaking the delicate wood. "Oh, how beautiful!" she exclaimed as the drawer came out to its full length. There, upon the soft purple velvet of its case, coiled a shining rope of pearls!

With delicate fingers that shook a little, Jannet lifted the case from the drawer and laid it on the desk before her. As in a dream she took hold of the glistening strand and drew it up, letting the loops of pearls unfold from their long curling. What wonderful pearls they were! Jannet knew little about pearls, but she could appreciate beauty. This must be very valuable,—her mother's—hers!

Suddenly she lifted them against her cheek while quick tears came to her eyes. Oh, these had been on her mother's neck the last time that they were worn. Jannet ran to the picture. Yes, she had worn these when that photograph was taken. Why had Jannet not thought of that when she read the diary just now? She looked at the shimmering little pile that she was holding in two hands. Then she put them around her own neck. Twice they went around, coming just a little above the round neck of the dress that Jannet was wearing.

There was no one to see the pretty picture that was made by the blue-eyed girl with her golden hair, as she stood looking up at the other older girl so like her. How Jannet loved to feel the pearls on her neck. She would like to wear them all the time, she thought, but she sighed as she thought of their value. How many things might have happened to them in these years, and why had not her mother been able to find them? There they were, right in the drawer, as her mother must have put them away, —unless someone had taken them for a joke, or spite, and put them back later.

That thought troubled Jannet, but she was not right. A more peculiar circumstance than she could then imagine had hidden the pearls.

Should she tell her uncle about them? Jannet considered that for some time, while she carefully

looped the pearls again and replaced them. No, she did not believe that she would. She would know her uncle a little better first before she made a confidant of him. And if she did tell him about the pearls, or the scrap of paper, for that matter, she would have somebody else present, too. What if Uncle Pieter should claim the necklace! Oh, he couldn't have the *heart* to take anything of her mother's away from her—but she "guessed she wouldn't tell him just yet."

Jannet knew that she would not forget where the spring was, but after she closed the drawer again, she gave the surroundings a rub with her handkerchief, for want of a duster, and then closed the desk just in time, for there was a great rapping upon her door. It was Jan, drumming again on the panels and calling her.

"Jannetje Jan," came the call, with the Dutch Y sound for J.

"Yes, Yan," she answered, running to open the door, for she had slipped the bolt as well, when she started in on the desk.

"Get ready to ride, won't you? Nell and Chick are out here," said Jan, adding, when the door was opened, "and worse luck, I've got to go back with Chick and finish up school! We only have a day or two more of fun!"

"I'll be out in a minute, Jan. I'm aching for a

ride. Will you get my horse ready while I dress?"

"Yep,—intended to. Make it snappy." With this, Jan went away, while Jannet, elated with her discovery, the mystery of it all, and the prospect of fun with her young friends, hurried into her riding clothes.

CHAPTER VIII

JANNET'S "FORTUNE"

It did not take Jannet long to get ready for the expedition. Just before starting out of her room, she paused, her hand on the knob, for this room had more protection than the old-fashioned latches. Should she leave the pearls in the desk? They had disappeared from it before.

But where could she put them if she took them from the desk? Naturally she could not wear them. Windows and doors were open. She could hear the sounds of laughter from where her young friends were. She must hurry. She ran back to her windows, put them down and locked them firmly. Then she took her key from the lock, locked the door from the outside and pinned the key inside her sweater pocket.

"I'm the 'foxy Jannet' now," she said to herself, thinking of one of Jan's expressions. "*Now* if any one gets in,—I'll know it's some one with a key!"

Walking rapidly, past the door of Paulina's room, down the back stairs, out of the back door, Jannet

hastened to join her friends. Jan, mounted on a curveting black horse, was leading the animal intended for Jannet and cantered toward her, stopping at a high block. He started to dismount to help Jannet, but she waved him back. "Don't get off, Jan. Pity if I can not get on myself. Is this the stump of the old black walnut that nearly killed you when it fell?"

"Who told you? Yes; if Chick hadn't yelled in time, I'd have been under the trunk instead of being scratched up a little by some of the branches. You remember that wind storm, Nell?"

"Indeed I do. We didn't know where you boys were and Mother was almost crazy till you came in after it was all over. I was sure that you were over here, but the telephone wires were down."

"Why do I have Lucy, Jan? I thought that Uncle Pieter wanted me to ride Ben?"

"That is what took me so long, Jannet. I saddled Ben first and found that he went a little lame. Lucy is all right, only a little more skittish. She never runs away, but look out for her shying a little."

"All right. I like Lucy better anyhow."

Jannet was happy with the reins in her hand, for riding was her favorite sport. This pursuit of real country roads, away from hampering conditions of the city was what she called to Nell "real riding," instead of "riding lessons." Nell and John Clyde,

or "Chick", drew alongside as Jannet settled herself for the trip and patted her pretty steed.

"Did you know that you are going to have supper with us at home to-night, after our picnic dinner in the hills?" asked Nell.

"No, I didn't. What fun! But Jan, shan't we take something for the picnic?"

"Of course," Jan answered, with a grin. "Say, I forgot all about that. Good thing that you spoke of it." Jan turned his horse toward the house. "I told P'lina, though. There she comes now."

From the back door Paulina this moment made her appearance with a package in her hands. As she approached, her sharp nose looked sharper than ever. Her solemn eyes surveyed the riders with no display of interest and her stolid face was without a smile. A small shawl decorated her shoulders, pinned across her breast, but the tight knot of black hair was without a covering and the spring breeze blew a wiry wisp over her forehead.

"I think that it is going to rain," said she shortly, as she gave the neat package to Jan, with something for tying it to his saddle. She had given a curt nod in the direction of the Clydes.

"Oh, now, Paulina," said Jan, grinning down at her, "don't be a calamity howler. We'll get under a rock somewhere if it does. Any other woes that you can think of?"

Jannet was quite shocked at Jan's frankness and expected to see "Old P'lina" show some offense. Far from this, the stony features almost relaxed into a smile, so Jannet thought. "Be careful," Paulina said. "An owl hooted all last night and the ghost walked over my head," With this cheerful announcement, Paulina turned away.

"What did Paulina mean, 'over her head'?" asked Nell Clyde.

"Rats in the attic, Nell. I heard 'em, too." So Jan explained.

But Paulina had overheard and looked back over her shoulder. "We have no rats," said she, "and rats don't tiptoe down imaginary stairs. It was *her* again."

Jan looked cross, but he said nothing further as Paulina rapidly walked toward the house. Jannet fancied that Jan did not like to have Paulina's superstitions aired before the Clydes. There was enough talk in the neighborhood, in all probability.

Chick urged his horse on, passing Jannet and Nell, but Jan, as he followed, leaned over to Jannet. "Paulina is an old goose," said he in a low tone. "Her imagination works all night. Don't pay any attention to what she says."

This was funny, for Jan had seemed to enjoy joking Jannet about it before now. Boys must be

odd creatures,—but Jan and Chick were pretty good at that!

"I wish that we had a family ghost," laughed Nell, as she drew her horse beside Lucy. "Have you seen yours, yet, Jannet?"

"I am not sure that I would know it if I saw it," replied Jannet, after a moment's hesitation.

"Let me come to stay all night with you some time, Jannet, and perhaps the ghost will walk for us."

"If the ghost *should* walk, I'd be glad to have company, I can tell you, and I'll love to have you any time. I suppose I'll have to ask Cousin Di or Uncle Pieter first, though."

"Of course you will, and I'd better not be inviting myself over!"

"Don't think of that, Nell. I'm sure that it can be arranged and I'm glad that you thought of it. You haven't had a peep at my dear room yet."

"No, I haven't, and I have never even been inside of that old part of the Van Meter place, though Chick is there so much when Jan is home. Do you suppose that we could see the attic, too?"

"That might depend on Paulina. I haven't asked to go there yet. I've felt a little timid, you know, just coming. The only place where I feel that I have a real right is in my mother's room. But Jan goes

all over and has a den in the attic, and he isn't nearly so much related as I am."

"I heard a neighbor say once, Jannet, that your uncle Pieter had treated your mother shamefully and had beaten her out of a lot of property that she ought to have had. I don't suppose that I ought to tell you this and perhaps it isn't true, but if it is, you ought to know it."

"Yes. But I do not believe it. People gossip. Why should he send for me?" This from Jannet, in spite of her most recent suspicions!

"Remorse," laughed Nell.

"Uncle Pieter was a lot older than my mother and perhaps he wanted to have his own way about things, but I'll not believe yet that he is dishonest. I'm going to stand up for my people, Nell, now that I have found them. Mother must have died before my grandfather, so how could Uncle Pieter cut her out of her rights?"

"I don't know."

"Exactly. I'm surely grateful to Uncle Pieter for finding me," said Jannet, to close the subject.

Jannet was a thoughtful girl, and she had determined not to lose sight of what Uncle Pieter had done for her in sending for her. She had her own doubts, particularly since finding her mother's diary notes and the slip of paper in the library book,

but none of the neighbors should suspect them.

Jannet did not know whether she liked her uncle or not. She was attracted sometimes, then again his coldness and reserve repelled her. He had not offered to have any explanatory talk with her so far, though she realized that the spring work on the large place was engaging his attention. He was out of the house most of the time either upon his horse about the farm, or on business errands away from the neighborhood. Jannet had not inquired what his interests were, for she was not informed about such matters.

Her cousin Andrew Jannet loved already. Jan was a jolly companion, and Mrs. Holt was everything that a girl could ask for in a kind chaperon. She was not demonstrative, but then, Jannet was not used to demonstrative affection. Paulina was the "funniest." She was silent, matter-of-fact, and stiff, but Jannet knew that "Old P'lina" missed nothing of what was going on at the Van Meter home.

Nell Clyde was a plump, sturdy little thing, but active for all her plumpness, sitting her horse well as the girls now pushed their mounts forward a little to catch up with the boys. Nell had been seized with a great admiration for the graceful, golden-haired Jannet and had already confided her dreams to her as she had not done to any of the other girls

whom she knew. Jannet, more accustomed to many girl friends, had been more reserved so far about her own affairs, though she was delighted to find so congenial a girl so near.

No unhappy thoughts were Jannet's to-day. The pleasure of riding, the fresh air, the morning sunshine, and the quiet memory of the lovely thing hid at home in her desk brought her spirits to a high pitch. P'lina must certainly be mistaken, for there was scarcely a cloud. Lucy behaved with great decorum after a long gallop over a good stretch in the road, during which the horses worked off any excess of spirits that they may have possessed at the start.

The Clyde place was on their way and Chick dashed in to get their share of the lunch, which was not ready when they had ridden over for Jannet and Jan. Jannet laughed as she watched Chick, for with a boy's nonsense, he spread out his elbows at a ridiculous angle, leaned forward in his saddle, letting himself be lifted up and jolted down in a comical exhibition of bad riding. Flapping the reins, he loudly chirruped to his long-suffering animal.

"Ichabod Crane!" exclaimed the amused Jannet; and Nell, who was familiar also with Irving's *Legend of Sleepy Hollow,* remarked that Chick was almost lanky enough to fit the character.

The boys were sure that the folks had not put up

enough lunch, but Nell's more practiced eye measured the two packages. "Don't you worry," said she. "There's a whole fried chicken in each, or I miss my guess."

Over devious ways, where Jannet knew that she would be lost, the little party of four went into the hills and among the pines. Here and there a little stream with its trickling waters helped to make the beauty of the way. Jannet kept thinking that it was her mother's home country. "I wonder if my mother used to ride," she said to Jan.

"Sure she did. Andy said something yesterday about her having a horse called Juniper that threw her once and pretty nearly ended her life then and there. How queer that you have all this to find out!"

"Yes, and that's the advantage of being here for a while. Things come out gradually, just the sort of little everyday things that you would like to know. What are we going to do up here besides the picnic lunch, Nell?"

"Just see things, and find wild flowers, and see what birds are back. Chick has to take a list back to one of his teachers that wants to know when certain birds come here. We're going to hitch the horses here, or let them graze a little, if there's anything to graze on, while we climb higher to a grand place to see the valley and to spread our lunch."

"Any snakes?" Jannet inquired.

"We are not likely to see any here, and it is so open up on the rocks that it will not be damp. Mother warned me not to have the lunch where it was damp, but this sun will dry anything off."

The boys ungallantly went off by themselves for some time, reporting early for lunch. Chick had seen a chickadee, a tufted titmouse, a song sparrow, a purple finch and a woodcock. The girls had a handful of flowers, which they had picked carefully not to destroy the roots.

This was all very wholesome for Jannet, who had not taken much interest in nature study at Miss Hilliard's school and the Marcys did not have that except in a very general way in their summer curriculum of good times. Her mind was far away from ghosts and problems of all sorts while the picnic lasted. But Paulina was right in her prophecy. It did rain, though not until their good lunch was eaten and its crumbs scattered for the birds.

First there were a few scattered drops, then a little shower, which made them all run for their raincoats. But then they noticed that it looked very black in one portion of the sky. "We'd better get out of here, girls," said Chick. "It may be a thunderstorm and we oughtn't to be among the trees."

Down they scrambled from the heights, found their horses and made their way as quickly as pos-

sible from the hills to the level country. Distant thunder began to be heard, and clouds collected thickly. The girls said nothing, but they did not enjoy the prospect. Then it began to rain, moderately at first. Chick motioned to Jannet to ride up with him, while Jan fell back with Nell.

Leaning over toward Jannet, while they were urging their horses forward, Chick told her that he and Jan thought it best to strike off from the main road about half a mile to where an "old settler" lived. "Do you mind?" Chick asked.

"Why should I?" asked Jannet. "It's better than being soaked, or scared to death with the lightning."

Chick laughed. "Are you afraid?"

"Not very, but it isn't especially safe."

Nothing more was said. In a moment they had reached the turn in the road and were making their way as fast as a very poor little side road would permit. Puddles and mud-holes had to be avoided. The birds were taking to cover as well as they. Chick pointed ahead to where a small farmhouse stood, not far away. It was not a very prepossessing place, even at a distance, but it promised shelter.

The driveway was open, fortunately, for the rain was coming down in sheets, as they galloped into it and drew up their horses under an open shed. The bombardment had begun. One sharp flash succeeded another and the crashes of thunder were of ter-

rific violence. "This is one April shower that I don't care for," Nell remarked, as she had difficulty in holding her frightened horse.

But Chick dismounted and held both her horse and his own. "Get off your horse, Jannet," said he, "it is better. Jan, you'd better do the same."

"Come, Lucy, it's all right," soothingly Jannet said to the pretty mare she rode, as she dismounted. Jan reached his hand to Lucy's bridle while Jannet and Nell withdrew a little from too close proximity to prancing horses and threatening heels.

Rain beating in from the opposite side, drove the party to the side of the shed nearest the house, which was not far away. There, at a side door, as the electrical display lessened somewhat, a curious figure appeared. It was bent and old, a sharp chin and piercing black eyes the most noticeable features under an old-fashioned cap. A red and black shoulder shawl, something like that which Paulina often wore, was pinned about the rounding shoulders. A long, blue calico dress came almost to the floor. The aged woman peered out and over to the little company under the shed. Jan and Chick touched their caps and the girls bowed, but no explanation seemed necessary. The storm would account for their presence.

"Who lives there?" Jannet asked of Nell, the noise of the rain making it unnecessary to lower her voice.

"It's one of the old Dutch farms and that is the grandmother of the farmer's wife. They are odd people, and they say that this old lady is half Indian and half gypsy. She is past ninety years old. She tells fortunes, and buys her tobacco."

"Tobacco!"

"Sure, she smokes a pipe," laughed Chick, who had overheard. "The women now use cigarettes, don't they?"

"Not any that I know, Chick," smiled Jannet. "Miss Hilliard says that she is training 'ladies,' not the 'sporting class.' A girl who tried out smoking in our school would get sent home too quickly to know whether she was coming or going. That's in the printed rules."

"The whole of it?" laughingly asked Jan.

"I don't mean the way I put it. You know that. I mean that the rule is against smoking. It does say, though, that young ladies who have the habit are requested to go elsewhere."

"Look, Jannet, she's beckoning to us," Nell interrupted.

Jannet noticed that Jan and Chick felt in their pockets. "I've got enough change, Chick," said Jan. "The poor old woman sees a chance to make a little money, and it's kind of nice of her to ask us in out of the rain."

"Gracious!" Nell exclaimed. "It will smell of stale

tobacco smoke and I don't know what else, in there, —but all right, if you boys want to. A fire would feel pretty good, as wet as we are, and I know that they will have one."

Jannet did not know that she cared to try it, but she would not make any objection, she thought. She would do what the rest did, though she did not want her fortune told,—she could get out of that.

The boys saw that the horses were firmly hitched to the posts of the shed and presently all of them dashed across the yielding, puddly grass and ground to the little stoop of the house. A plump woman of past middle age had come to the door by this time, while the old lady hobbled back to a chair by the fire. She was moving aside to make room for the guests when they entered.

"Come right in," pleasantly said the younger woman. "You got caught in one of the worst storms we've had yet. I'll hang up your raincoats in the kitchen and you can dry out a little before the fire. That rain would go through anything!"

"It's around the edges that we are wettest," said Nell, going on to explain about their picnic and inquiring about the health of the family and the grandmother in particular.

The grand-daughter, in the kitchen door, noting that her grandmother's back was turned to her, shook her head and tapped it with her fingers, to indicate

that the old lady's mind was not just what it should be, but answered cheerfully, "Oh, Grandma is coming on all right. She can hear as well as anybody, see well enough to read the paper, and she'll be ninety-three to-morrow."

"If that's so, we'll have to send her something to-morrow," said kindly Nell, "and wish her many happy returns."

Jannet, altogether inexperienced in country life, was gettting a glimpse of the kindly, helpful feeling that exists in many such neighborhoods. She stood at one side, near the blaze, which the farmer's wife tried to make burn more briskly.

"Who's the girl?" bluntly asked the old lady.

"Oh, I forgot," hastily said Nell. "This is Jannet Eldon, who has come to live with her uncle Pieter. Jannet, this is Mrs. Meer,—and her grandmother."

"Jannet Eldon, huh? Jannet. That was the name of the girl,—so you are Pieter's niece, then?"

"Yes'm," said Jannet, smiling at the old lady and looking at her with interest. "Did you know my mother?"

"I saw her often enough. You look like her. I told her fortune once, and I'll tell yours."

Janet shrank back a little, scarcely conscious that she did so. "Thank you, I don't believe that I want to have you do that. I'd rather not know, even if you *can* tell it."

"You don't believe in fortune telling, then. I'll not hurt you. If I read anything bad in your hand, I'll not tell you that."

The old woman's voice rose shrilly, and Mrs. Meer looked rather distressed. But Jannet's warm heart came to the rescue of the situation. It certainly could do no harm to satisfy the old woman. "Well, maybe it would be fun, then,—if you won't tell me of any 'bad luck'," and Jannet playfully shook her finger in warning.

She could see that "Grandmother," whose name she had not been told, was pleased. Her toothless mouth widened into a smile. She laid aside her pipe, which, as Nell had said, had been filling the room with a disagreeable smoke. "Sit down," she said. Jannet drew up a small wooden stool and held out her hand. Jan, with noble promptness, laid a fifty cent piece upon the mantel, hoping, as he told Jannet afterward, that the fortune would not scare her to death. The aged woman saw it and the dark eyes gleamed.

Wrinkled fingers took the young, delicate hand. "They thought that you were dead," she mumbled. Jannet did not know whether this were part of the fortune or not, but it was not particularly pleasant.

The old crone went on with a few facts about Jannet's past life, facts that any one could guess at, Nell said afterward. Then she took up Jannet's

character, cleverly setting forth some traits that Jannet recognized, though none that were not more or less flattering.

"Gee, she's giving you a good line, Jannet," said Chick.

"Sh-sh, you're interrupting her," warned Nell.

It grew more interesting. "Some one has looked for you," said the the old woman, "some one not your uncle. If you are found, it will bring you good luck. You have had a loss, but you will find what you look for. There will be something strange in your uncle's house, but do not be frightened. Nothing will harm you.

"Many like you. Some you can not trust, but you will find them out. I see a long journey. You will live to marry, perhaps twice. That is not clear. I see a long life and much happiness. You will have good luck this year and something will happen that you do not expect. That is all."

As if tired, the old lady dropped Jannet's hand. "I never told your fortune, Jan Holt. You have not lived here long."

"Say, you know my name already," said Jan, as if that were a sign of great cleverness. "Now give me a good one."

One by one the boys and girls had their fortunes told and left almost all the change which the boys possessed upon the mantel. Then they began to

gather up their coats and other articles of wearing apparel, feeling pretty well dried out by the heat from the fireplace. The storm had ceased before the aged grandmother had finished. Rapidly the four covered the distance remaining between this place and that of the Clydes, where they were to have dinner together. Nell promised to let Jannet wear one of her frocks, if necessary, for Jannet had started in such a hurry that she had not realized how odd it might be to eat dinner in her riding clothes.

"I'll certainly look funny in a dress of yours, Nell, —I'd better wear one of your mother's, or else ride on home. But if you don't mind I could wear these things; they are dry now."

"We'll fix you up some way, Jannet. Don't worry."

"Say, Jannet," soberly said Jan, "may I be your second husband?"

"Second husband!" ejaculated Jannet, a grin beginning to spread her pretty mouth.

"Yep. I wouldn't want to be the first, because he may die, according to the old gypsy. Of course, I'll probably marry, and then my wife may have objections to the arrangement."

"You crazy boy! I believe that you'd make fun about anything! Yes, I'll 'consider your application,' as Miss Hilliard says. But I'm only going to marry somebody very wonderful, and he'll not dare

leave me till I'm as old as Grandma Meer, or whatever her name is."

"Some outlandish name," said Nell, "that I've heard and forgotten."

"Chick, she says that she is only going to marry somebody *very wonderful.* That settles it. It isn't me. Honestly, Jannet, she read you a pretty good fortune; but some of it was queer. Of course, you know that the whole countryside knows about our ghost, so she could make up anything there."

"I don't mind, and I'm going to forget it, Jan. Poor old soul! Are you really going to take her something to-morrow, Nell? I'd like to do something, too, even tobacco!"

"Why, Jannet!" said Jan in falsetto tones, as if representing Jannet's school, shocked beyond words.

Jannet gave Jan a solemn glance, drawing her mouth down at the corners and rolling her blue eyes. Then, grinning again, she said, "Grandma Meer is too old to reform, Jan. Besides, if it isn't wicked for Cousin Andy to smoke, it isn't wicked for Grandma Meer. And she doesn't have to be a lady."

This conversation took place on the way from the Clyde barns to the house. The four sauntered along in the highest of spirits, though it was almost too near dinner time, or, more properly here, supper time, for them to linger.

A skirt-and-tunic dress of Nell's was found possible to arrange for Jannet, and more fun was in prospect when by the telephone it was arranged for Jannet and Jan to stay all night. "And may we have Nell and Chick over to-morrow night, Cousin Di?" Jannet asked sweetly.

"Of course you may. Jan often has Chick. I don't know how it has happened that we have not had him more this time. You and Nell ought to have great fun in the 'haunted' room. I'll have Paulina cook you something, too."

"Thank you, Cousin Di." Turning, after hanging up the receiver, Jannet clasped her hands together in delight, as she communicated the results of her telephoning to the rest. "Oh, we can *stay,* and Cousin Di was *too cordial for words* about your coming over to-morrow night, Nell and Chick. Paulina will cook up something and we'll have a little evening party of it, I guess."

"Good," said Jan. "Let's hope that the ghost will walk."

"Mercy, no, Jan,—not really," said Jannet.

CHAPTER IX

ANOTHER GHOSTLY VISITATION

THAT evening, at the Clydes' country home, Nell called up some of her friends and asked them to drive over for an evening of good times. Perhaps half a dozen girls and boys came, initiating Jannet into the pleasures of country life. It was a new atmosphere to Jannet and she liked it. They were all a little stiff at first, pleasant, but waiting to see what the girl from the city school was like, Soon, however, when Nell and Chick started some games and they found Jannet throwing herself into everything with a real delight, the party waxed merry.

The next morning Jannet and Jan rode home. Jannet heard Jan and Paulina in more than one mild argument as she tried to pack for him and he objected to her packing. "Of course I'm going to take that, P'lina. That is one of the most important things. If you can't get that in, I'll tumble the whole mess out and pack it all over myself. What's the idea? Do you think that you have to do it?"

"Now, Jan, your ma—" but Jannet shut the

door to hear no more. She supposed, as she smiled over what she had heard, that some treasure like a bat or a ball glove or mask had been omitted. She was beginning a diary, suggested to her by her mother's having kept one. But Jannet decided that she would never destroy hers, because it would be such a good history for her children, if she had any.

Jannet spent a good part of the morning in this way, after a good visit with Mrs. Holt. Then Paulina came in to sweep and clean her room. There was another servant to help with this sort of thing, but Paulina, who almost felt that she had part ownership in the place, liked to take care of this old part of the home herself. Paulina was "queer," Jannet thought. She could not tell what Paulina thought of her, but she rather hoped that Paulina did not hate her, for "Old P'lina" was a family institution, it seemed. She grew older and older in Jannet's thought, for Paulina's face was much more lined than Uncle Pieter's, in spite of the dark hair. Nell said that P'lina must dye her hair, but Jannet knew that Nell was wrong.

Nell and Chick Clyde did not arrive until long after supper and said that they had company at home, unexpected company for supper. But they enjoyed the evening together, Mrs. Holt keeping her promise of the "party," which meant something good to eat at the proper time.

Jannet wondered if Uncle Pieter would have approved, for they had chicken and biscuits, with other accompaniments, for a first course, and Paulina's delicious angel food cake with a whipped cream "salad" over it or "by" it, as Jannet put it. Nuts, maraschino cherries and pineapple made this toothsome. But this was Jan's last evening at home. Sometime the next day he was leaving for school. "Yes, Nell," said he, "hard-hearted Uncle Pieter is responsible for my leaving; but after all Chick could scarcely get his lessons without me, and it will be fun to see the other boys."

After the refreshment the boys were restless. It was not far from bedtime and Jan suggested that Chick go with him to the attic den to see his latest invention.

"You might invite us, too, Jan," said Jannet, with a freedom which she was beginning to feel in this new environment.

"Oh, girls wouldn't understand, and besides, it doesn't work yet. I want to get Chick's ideas about it. Then the attic is where the ghost usually begins, you know."

"Honestly, Jan, did you ever hear or see anything strange?"

Jan looked mysterious, then laughed. "'Honestly,' Jannet, I think most of the noises might be from some ordinary cause. But once I did—oh, well,

there are lots of odd sounds and things in an old house. But no ghost has ever come into my attic den so far as I know."

"I wouldn't go up there after dark for worlds!" Nell declared.

"Silly!" So her brother commented. "Jan's den is a real room, at a gable, and used to be a bedroom, Paulina says. There's a rambling sort of hall, and a door, that Paulina keeps locked, into the rest of the attic, which isn't all floored, she says. Paulina says 'Keep Out,' in large letters, doesn't she, Jan?"

"Yep," answered Jan, with a look at Chick which was intended to mystify the girls.

"Maybe P'lina is the ghost, then," Nell suggested, and Jannet thought to herself that it was not impossible.

"I'll tell P'lina that I want to see if any of my mother's boxes or trunks are up there, and perhaps she will give me the key!"

"You wouldn't *dare,* Jannet!"

"Yes I would, Nell!"

"*Much* you would," and Jan's disbelieving eyes laughed into Jannet's sparkling ones. "Wait till I come home again anyhow," he added.

"Perhaps I will, Jan," his cousin conceded.

The boys said goodnight, leaving the two girls in the quaint old kitchen, where they had made taffy in one of the old kettles, by the express permission of

Mrs. Holt, and under her supervision, for Paulina had not wanted to have the "trouble and muss" of a fire here, among the cherished antiques of the kitchen. "Before the weather gets too hot," meditatively said Jannet, taking a last piece of the sticky but very delicious sweet from one of the pans, "I'd like to have an old-fashioned taffy pull and invite some of the girls and boys that I met at your house, Nell. I'm afraid that Uncle Pieter and Old P'lina might not like it, but perhaps Cousin Di could get permission for me."

"Perhaps so," doubtfully answered Nell, "but remember that Chick and Jan leave to-morrow."

"That's so. Well, perhaps I'll be here next winter. I've read about the good times in the country in the winter and I almost wish I needn't go to school."

"Your uncle intends to keep you here, Jannet. I heard Mother say so."

Jannet looked inquiringly at Nell, but made no comment. That might not be so nice after all, not to go back to the girls and Miss Hilliard. But Miss Hilliard was her guardian, and she would do the deciding.

Mrs. Holt came hurrying in to say that she had almost forgotten them, and that by all means they must get to bed. With a kind goodnight she left them, and they heard her routing the boys from their attic den. The sound of their descent by the attic

stairs could have been heard in Philadelphia, Nell said.

The girls went upstairs by the front staircase, turning to the right with the dark, curving rail of the banisters. To Jannet's door there was only a step, and Nell looked on along the railing to the front of the upstairs hall. "That front room on this side," Jannet explained, "belonged to my grandfather and grandmother, and the big chimney, with gorgeous fireplaces, is between their room and what was my mother's, now mine. There are plenty of other fireplaces, though," she added, "only this seems to be the biggest chimney. See, my door almost faces the corridor that leads to the new part, where Cousin Di sleeps, and Paulina's room is right off the back hall, there. Jan's room is downstairs. He picked it out himself."

"Chick says that he has a cot in the den upstairs, too."

"Is that so? I shouldn't think that he would want to sleep there."

"Why, Jannet! I thought that you didn't believe in ghosts!"

"I don't but just the same,—" and Jannet stopped to laugh at herself.

By this time they were in the room, Nell wondering a little at Jannet's having to unlock the door. But she did not ask her why she kept the door locked,

and Jannet did not explain. One thing after another had interfered with her having had an opportunity to open the secret drawer in her desk for a glimpse of the pearls. First she had been expecting Paulina in to clean. Then, after some delay, the cleaning took place. A call, plans with Cousin Di and a long drive with her and Cousin Andy, partly for the sake of errands, completely filled the day till time for the Clydes to come.

But now, as Jannet displayed her room to her guest, placing the little overnight bag, and quietly mentioning her pleasure in having her mother's room and her mother's picture, she was anxious to assure herself of her new possession in the desk and felt impatient with herself for not having locked the door against everybody long enough to see that the pearls were safe. Of course they were, though.

What was Nell saying? Oh, yes, she was commenting on the size of the house, admiring it, but telling Jannet the gossip. Some said that her uncle intended to turn it into a summer hotel, and others said that he had expected his daughter's family to occupy it with him, as well as his son's. "Andrew was going to be married, if he hadn't gotten all banged up in the war."

"Oh,—too bad!" exclaimed sympathetic Jannet. "Wouldn't his sweetheart marry him?"

"More likely he would not let her."

"Dear me, I'll never catch up with the why and wherefore of our family. Can you keep a secret, Nell?"

"Try me. Even Chick says that I can."

Nell had admired the desk before, but Jannet led her to it again.

"I want to show you a secret drawer, Nell, and what I found in it, something wonderful,—my mother's pearls, the ones she has on in the picture!"

Nell leaned over with the greatest interest, while Jannet seated herself in front of her desk, now open, and pressed the spring as she had done before. Out came the drawer, more easily than before,—but empty!

Quickly Nell looked into her friend's face, which was blank with surprise. "Gone!" Jannet exclaimed. "Why, Nell, it's just as it happened before! Mother lost them, too, or they were stolen from her desk. Oh, *who* could have done it! Why *did* I leave them there!"

Jannet dropped her hands in her lap and sat there looking at Nell, who drew up a chair and took one of Jannet's hands to pat it and try to comfort her.

"I ought not to care so much, perhaps," said Jannet, almost ready to cry, "but I loved to think that Mother has worn them. I'd think it a dream, but

Nell, I put them on my neck and loved to have them there,—don't tell me that I'm quite crazy!" Jannet, smiling, was herself now.

"Of course you are not crazy. I believe that the pearls were there, and where could they have gone? They did not walk off by themselves certainly, and there isn't another thing in the drawer. Could there be a crack in the bottom?" Nell tapped the delicate wood with her finger.

"Not big enough to lose a big case full of pearls, Nell. Well, it can't be helped. I'll examine the desk to-morrow and see if they *could* have been put in another drawer,—or something." As she spoke, Jannet began to open the little drawers which she knew, while Nell exclaimed over the tiny springs and the skill with which the drawers had been hidden.

But Jannet did not want to make Nell have an unhappy time over her lost pearls. In a few moments she was her philosophical self again. "It can't be helped, Nell, and as I never did have them before, I can get along without them now. Let's get to bed. I'm glad that you think the room is pretty and the things nice. I'm wealthy enough in my mother's things without the pearls. It seems now as if I have been waiting all my life to come to this room!"

It was as they settled down in bed, after putting the windows at the proper height and turning off the

light, that Nell happened to think of something. "Jannet, you'll find your pearls! Didn't your fortune say that you would lose something and find it again?"

" 'You will find what you look for,' " replied Jannet, in such a good imitation of the old fortune-teller's cracked tones that Nell laughed and Jannet apologized, saying that she ought not to have made fun of Grandma Meer.

"Poor old soul," said Nell, drowsily. For a wonder the girls did not lie awake to talk. It had been a full day and soon they were asleep; for Nell was an easy-going girl, not nervous about fancied ghosts in a room as bright and pleasant as this, while Jannet, accustomed to share her room and often her bed with Lina Marcy or some other school-girl, felt it quite natural to have company.

What time it was when Jannet was suddenly wide awake, she did not know. A confused dream, the result, she well knew, of taffy and other good things to eat, was floating away from her. Nell was not stirring the least bit and she could not even hear her breathe. That was odd. Cautiously she turned, sighed, and reached over to touch her friend lightly, when suddenly Nell clutched Jannet's hand and reached Jannet's lips with her other hand to insure silence.

Jannet squeezed Nell's hand to indicate under-

standing, but she was a little frightened. What was it? The same old ghost, a burglar, or was Nell only startled at some little sound? Jannet had bolted her door, but it would be possible for some one to climb up on the trellis and climb into the window which opened upon the little balcony, she remembered. That one she had not raised very high and the screen was in.

It was pitch dark. There were no glimmerings of lights outside as in a city. The night was cloudy, without star or moon visible. Quite a breeze was stirring. Perhaps there would be another storm, though there were no flashes of electricity.

"Tap, tap, tap, tap," she heard. Well, that might be the broken branch that she had noticed hanging against the pergola outside.

Then a weird sound began. Perhaps that was what had wakened Nell. That must be the "Dutch Banshee" that Jan had mentioned. It was indescribable, something like the whistling of the wind, then a little like the hooting of an owl. Was that what Paulina meant, then?

That *was* a queer, rustling sound. Yes, it *did* sound like someone lightly coming down a stairway; why, it sounded right in the wall, Jannet thought! Step, step, step, step, slowly. Paulina would be saying "That's *'Her!'* "

Could it be true that there was something sinister

and evil, or something unhappy, that could not rest, that came back to its old home? In the daytime Jannet would not have had these fearful thoughts, but it was eerie, indeed, to lie in a dark room and listen to sounds that she did not understand.

A faint moaning sound began and suddenly stopped with a little choke or gasp.

"Is Chick a ventriloquist?" whispered Jannet.

"No," replied Nell, "and neither is Jan."

For a few moments there was no sound at all. Then the "Dutch Banshee" began again. Jannet whispered, "Static,—Jan's radio!"

"No," whispered Nell. "Keep still!"

Jannet listened. Yes, it did sound more like a voice now. How scarey it did make a body feel! Anyhow it wasn't in the room. Jannet sat up in bed, determined not to be frightened as she had been before. If there were anything going on, she was going to see it, come what might! She wished again for the flashlight that she had forgotten and left at school. Nell gained courage and sat up, too.

Now there was an odd light from somewhere. Why,—there was a dim veiled light on the wall, as if shining through! What in the world! There, it was gone. But some one was moaning,—no, sobbing!

Next the sound, tap, tap, tap. Jannet again thought of Paulina's expression: "I suppose that's 'Her'

coming down some stairs somewhere," she whispered to Nell, who still clutched her hand.

"Let's put on the light and run to Paulina's room," Nell whispered, trying to pierce the darkness, and looking in the direction of the wall where the light had appeared. There it was for a moment again! Now it faded; then it came more strongly and went out again.

"It looks as if somebody were passing back and forth behind a screen, Nell," whispered Jannet. "Come on." But just then there came that clicking sound that Jannet had heard on that other night. "Wait, Nell," she whispered. "I'll get to the door, and if nothing gets me, come, too."

"No," again said Nell, holding Jannet as if to keep her in bed. There was somebody,—something,—in the room! A cover of the bed began to be drawn off, as before. Gently it moved. Jannet, ready for an experiment to find out if this were a person or a ghost that entered her room so mysteriously, reached for the slowly moving cover and gave it a jerk back toward her. She met with no resistance at all, and pulled the cover in a little heap around her by the force of her own effort.

This was too much! Jannet leaped out of bed, seized Nell by the arm, and ran in the direction of the electric button and the door. As she pushed the

button, she was sure that she heard a similar sound behind her, but she only glanced behind to see that no one was after them, as she pulled out the little bolt and pushed Nell into the hall ahead of her.

Barefooted and breathless, the girls stood in the hall a moment, listening. Nothing followed them. They peeped back into the room after a few minutes. It was not cold, but both girls were shivering.

"Do you suppose that the boys could fool us in some way?" asked Nell, who remembered her brother's tricks.

"Perhaps one of them hid somewhere," said Jannet. "But how did he get out? This business of pulling a cover off happened once before, Nell. Perhaps there is a way of getting into the room. The windows were 'way up to-night, too."

"Let's run down and see if the boys are in their room," suggested Nell.

"All right, but the other time was before Jan got home."

Back the girls went, somewhat timorously, to be sure, to put on slippers and kimonos. Thus clad, they slipped quietly down the back stairs, and Nell stepped close to the door to listen. A heavy pin, with which she had fastened her kimono, fell out at this juncture and in the stillness of the hall it made quite a little noise.

"What's that?" they heard Chick say, and presently a low grunt answered him. The bed creaked and the girls flew upstairs as fast as they could, Nell retrieving her pin first.

"Well," said Jannet, as they entered the room again, "shall we wake up Paulina and get things stirred up? You will be afraid to go to sleep again, won't you?"

"I g-guess not," shivered Nell. "Put down the windows and leave the light on."

"We'd smother, child," said Jannet.

"Look under the bed, then. I refuse to get into it unless that is done." Nell tried to be jolly with poor success.

"Perhaps that is where—It—was. Say, that was a funny feeling, Nell, to jerk that coverlid and find it come just too easy!"

As before, Jannet went all over to see what she could see. There was no sign of any one's having been in the closets or in the bath room. The vines on the porch looked undisturbed. Jannet put the windows down to a point where they would have to be raised to admit anyone. Again she went over the paneled wall to see if there were a hidden door between her room and the next one. "But that light was too near the big chimney," she said. "Perhaps there might be an opening of some sort there."

The girls looked up into the chimney with its

bricks discolored by many a fire. "What's on the other side of the chimney?" Nell asked.

"That other room just like this,—are you afraid to go in there?"

"No," answered Nell, beginning to get over her scare. But they found the door of the other room locked and looked at each other as much as to say, "Perhaps the mystery lies here."

"Nothing hurt us anyhow, Nell, as I thought before. We'll leave the side lights on and put that little screen I have up on a chair to keep the light out of our eyes. I haven't heard another sound, have you?"

"No, I guess the ghosts have gotten through. What time is it, Jannet?"

Jannet looked at her wrist watch but it had stopped. "The ghosts were too much for my timepiece, Nell, but it must be 'most morning. It is about the same time, I think, that the comforter went off my bed and never did come back. I've always wanted to ask Paulina about it, but someway, she is so sure about ghosts that I hated to stir her up, or draw any questions. I declare, Nell, I'm different here. *It's* so different!"

"I should say it is,—and yet you like this room."

"Yes, Nell, I do, and I'm going to find out what or who does this. Maybe it's Paulina."

"For half a cent I'd like to see if she is in her

room. Don't you suppose she heard that moaning?"

"I don't see how she could help it, and with our putting on and off lights all around, too."

Jannet had scarcely stopped speaking when there was the sound of an opening door. The light went on in the hall again. "Girls," said Paulina, "did you hear it?"

Jannet almost laughed out, for Paulina in her long muslin gown looked so funny. She had thrust her feet into immense woolen slippers, wore the little shoulder shawl, and—of all things—a night-cap,—over her hair!

"Yes, Paulina, and we almost lost the coverlid, as I lost the blue comforter one night."

"What?" asked Paulina, "that blue comforter that I put on your bed?"

"Yes. I've never seen it since."

"It's in the closet. I thought that you put it there."

Jannet and Paulina eyed each other. Nell laughed. "It was us in the hall, with the lights on, Paulina."

"I thought so. It was *Her* in your room, then, I suppose."

"Who is she, Paulina?" asked Jannet. "Not Mother, of course."

"No. Ask your Uncle Pieter who cries and sobs and goes through walls. Go to bed. There'll be nothing more to-night. I'll not call you early."

"Thank you, Paulina. I'm going to leave on one little light."

Paulina made no reply to this remark, but went off in the sudden fashion she had, and the girls heard her door open and close.

The human contact, and the assurance of "Old P'lina" that there would be no further disturbance, relieved the situation for the girls. Nell, with a sigh of relief, crawled between the sheets. "Ghost or no ghost, I'm going to sleep, Jannet."

"So am I. But the next time, I'm going to *'yell'* for Paulina, and not try to see it through myself. Who do you suppose she meant when she told me to ask Uncle Pieter?"

"His wife, I suppose. But there is a lots older ghost than she is, and I 'spect P'lina's mad at your Uncle Pieter about something. She's terribly queer herself, you know."

"I'm going to get acquainted with Paulina and find out all about the family history. I've been afraid to ask her so far. I'm so sorry, Nell, for all this. I hope that you will sleep now."

"I will. Don't worry. Some day I'll tell of this to my grandchildren and you will see their little eyes bulge out if you are around."

Jannet laughed, as she arranged the screen and shook off her slippers to hop into bed. "Perhaps in time I'll get so used to our ghost," she said, "that

I'll miss her if she does not perform every so often."

"Sh-sh, Jannet! You might get her mad at you!"

Jannet thought this so funny that she laughed till the bed shook, and Nell giggled with her. But both girls within were really rather serious over the affair, wondering and thinking for some time, Jannet's mind dwelling on the pearls as well. "Nell," she said, sleepily, after a little, "perhaps the ghost has my pearls. I've thought up a name for them,—Phantom Treasure. Now it's there, and now it isn't, but the ghost that has it had better beware!"

CHAPTER X

JANNET GATHERS HER IMPRESSIONS

I AM so ashamed, Lina, not to have written you a long letter before this. You are good to have sent me a letter in reply to those few cards. I had to write to Miss Hilliard, you know, and some way, I haven't felt like writing about some things that I have really wanted to tell you, like how I felt to be in my mother's room and all. I'll wait until I see you, I think. I am going to ask Uncle Pieter, when I know him better, if I can not have a little company this summer. I feel pretty sure that he will let me ask you for a visit, so please keep it in mind before you fill up the summer with other things. Then I can show you everything and tell you all about the mysteries here, for there are some that I do not understand.

I meant to have a long talk with my uncle right away, yet I have been here for several weeks and I have not talked to him alone. I've been too timid to ask, for one thing; then he is busy about the place, and then I don't feel that I can go to him as I can

to Miss Hilliard. He lets Cousin Di, or Mrs. Holt, look after my wants.

Please, by the way, keep what I tell you to yourself, except what anybody might know. You will "use judgment" what to report to the girls that know you have had a letter from me.

Your namesake is here, for one, in our family,—"Old P'lina," they call her and she is so odd. You will have to see her to appreciate her. She is the real housekeeper and just about owns the place. But while you are Adeline, she is Paulina, the i long.

Mrs. Holt is a rather distant cousin who knows Uncle Pieter very well and was a much younger friend of his wife, who is dead. Her mother, Mrs. Perry, will be here pretty soon, they say. She went on a little visit and keeps staying. Cousin Di worries about it, though I'm sure I don't know why. Two of her friends from Albany have been here this week and they have had a fine time. Uncle Pieter likes to have company, Cousin Andy says, though he doesn't pay much attention to anybody, I must say. I suppose he just likes to have the big place full of people, not to be lonesome.

Cousin Di is kind and easy-going. My lessons are a myth, for which I am not sorry. I don't see how I could have studied so far. Uncle Pieter looked at me one time, at dinner, and said, "You need not

hurry about lessons, Diana. Jannet looks as if she has had about enough of school. I suppose, Jannet, that you have been trained to think that school hours are the only thing in the world worth keeping?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "Aren't they? Most of the girls I know that amount to anything get their lessons."

For once Uncle Pieter laughed out. "Yes, yes," he said, "I suppose that is so. Whatever you have to do, keep at it, if you want to put it through. But we shall change matters a little, with the permission of your guardian, of course."

I did not like the way he said that, but then he does not know how fine Miss Hilliard is. I looked straight at him, but not saucily, and then I said, "Miss Hilliard is the one who has taken good care of me for all these years." I did not mean it for a "dig" at him, since of course he did not know that I existed. But I'm sure that he took it that way. He froze right up, and I wished that I had not said anything.

"I must see Miss Hilliard very soon," he answered, "and relieve her of her charge."

That scared me so that I sat right down at my lovely desk with the *secret drawers,* as soon as I reached my room, and wrote the conversation to Miss Hilliard. And I've wished ever since that I hadn't. I'm always doing something that I wish

afterwards I hadn't,—but you know me, Lina!

So you see that I don't know whether I like my uncle very much or not, though I am grateful to him for hunting me up and that *ought* to make up for everything else. I think that Cousin Andy knows that his father is a little queer, for he makes it up to me by being extra nice. He is Andrew Van Meter and is somewhere around thirty years old, perhaps older, and was in the war. He was shell-shocked and wounded, but won't talk about it. He has some trouble with his back and there are days when he does not come to meals. I wanted to do something for him, read to him, or anything, but Cousin Di said not to, that Andrew wanted to be by himself at those times.

But other times he is just as friendly as can be. He said that his father "is a very scholarly man," and Uncle Pieter does read in his library till all hours of the night, Cousin Di says. She told me that it was my great-grandfather who made all the first money in the family. My grandfather was a sort of "gentleman farmer" and had "investments;" and Uncle Pieter got through college early and lived in Albany with his family until his father wanted him to come out and run this place,—and, oh, Lina, it is a beautiful place! There is a big orchard and a wonderful woods. I don't know anything about what kind of land it is, but there is money enough some-

where to fix the house up and have everything the way Uncle Pieter wants it.

I think that I mentioned Cousin Di's son in one of my cards. We are "Jannet and Jan," though Jan is called John at school. He is jolly and a little careless sometimes and carries his fun too far, Miss Hilliard would say, but I like him and his friend, "Chick" Clyde. I am getting well acquainted with Nell Clyde, who lives nearest of any of the young folks around here. Oh, it's so *different,* Lina, and I haven't begun to tell you the half! We have a family ghost, two or three of them, perhaps, and whatever it is, I've already had a queer experience or two that I'm not very keen on thinking about. My room seems to be the "haunted room," but I can't help but feel that somebody is responsible for these odd happenings and I'm going to find out about it just as soon as I can.

You would think that I'd have loads of time, wouldn't you? There are no lessons and no recitation hours. But for some reason, I don't get half as much done. Perhaps I was a little tired, and then it has been so exciting to find my family and learn so many different things.

Commencement will be here pretty soon. There is no chance of my going to Philadelphia for it, and really, Lina, I could not bring myself to leave right now. Don't say that to Miss Hilliard, though. She

might think that I have lost interest, and I haven't a bit.

Now you are saying that I might tell you more about the mysteries, but this letter is too long now. You can tell the girls that I'm in one of the fine old Dutch houses, with a ghost and everything, and that I've been having a great time, riding all over the place, and the country, and getting acquainted with people. I'll write you again after you are home. Do write again, though, and tell me all the news about the seniors and the play and how everything goes off. Give dear Miss Marcy a big hug for me. Aren't you lucky to have an aunt on the faculty!

So Jannet wrote to her chum and room-mate. Meanwhile Miss Hilliard and her friend Jannet's lawyer, had been making further inquiries about Pieter Van Meter, without discovering anything particularly to his credit. Miss Hilliard, busy with the last days of school, was relieved to find that there was no need to worry about the environment of her young protegée. Matters could rest where they were for the present. She had received no further suggestion from Mr. Van Meter in regard to a change in guardianship. This she did not intend to relinquish without being very sure that it was to Jannet's advantage. Of Jannet's first impressions, she thought little.

Miss Hilliard's errand in Albany, upon that day when she put Jannet in charge of Mrs. Holt and Andrew Van Meter, was to the office of a lawyer in Albany, a gentleman of whom she had been told, prominent in the place and of a wide acquaintance. Briefly she related the object of her visit, when, fortunately for her limited time, she was able to have an immediate interview.

"I want to make some inquiry about Mr. Pieter Van Meter and his family," she said, "and I was told that you would be a sincere source of information. I am the head of a school in Philadelphia, as you note by my card, and a young ward of mine, who knew nothing of this family, has just been discovered to be Mr. Van Meter's niece. There is some suggestion of a change of guardianship, to which I will not agree unless it is for the good of my ward. I rather think that the family must be of some standing, but the personality of Mr. Van Meter is unknown to me." Miss Hilliard paused, and looked inquiringly at the lawyer, a serious gentleman, who was listening to what she said with sober attention.

"You are right in regard to the standing of the family. I should say that Mr. Van Meter's wealth would clear him from any suspicion of being concerned financially in a desire to become the guardian of his niece. I know him, but not intimately. He is regarded as peculiar, is close at a bargain, looking

out for himself, but that can be said of many businessmen. I have never heard of anything dishonorable in connection with his transactions. To tell the truth, he seems to me like a disappointed and unhappy man. What there is back of that I do not know, unless it is the health of his son who is one of the war victims. Yet Andy, as we know him, is one of the finest lads, and his father may be glad to have him back at all. I understand, too, that there was serious difficulty between Mr. Van Meter and his second wife. At any rate she is not there any more. Indeed, she may not be living."

"I know nothing about Mr. Van Meter's family, and only just met his son and the cousin who is practically in charge of Jannet, Mrs. Holt."

"She is a very fine woman and consented to come with her mother, I understand, to make a home for Andy and give a cheerful atmosphere, needed particularly because his marriage was given up after the war. You need have no uneasiness about your ward so far as she is concerned. My family knows Mrs. Holt very well indeed."

"Well, thank you, this little conference has been very helpful. I must make my train now, but I felt that I wanted some assurance in regard to the family with whom I am leaving Jannet, before I could go back to my work with a clear conscience."

With this information, Miss Hilliard felt that a

load had been rolled off, as she took the train back to New York, and later went on to Philadelphia with cheerful news for Miss Marcy and the other teachers who were especially interested in Jannet. "Yes, Jannet's people seem to be all that we could desire," she reported. Yet she was none the less interested in hearing what Jannet had to say about the household, and wondered over a vein of reserve in Jannet's letters, coming to the conclusion that Jannet was not relating everything, or was reserving her conclusions about her family till she was better acquainted. This Miss Hilliard quite approved.

Jannet, to be sure, was quite ignorant of Miss Hilliard's conference in Albany and might have been very much interested in it, especially in one bit of information which she did not possess at this time, that relating to the fact of a second wife.

CHAPTER XI

JANNET BEGINS HER SEARCH

It must not be supposed that "Jannetje Jan Van Meter Eldon" was frightened into leaving her room and fleeing into the newer part of the great house. She felt decidedly uncomfortable after the visitation, or the ghostly phenomena, to which she and Nell Clyde had been subjected. Had Jannet been brought up in the midst of superstition, she might not have been so sure that there was a human cause back of the manifestations, but she was more determined than ever to find out how these things had happened. She was inclined to suspect Jan, though the fact that he had not arrived at the time the blue comforter had disappeared was an objection there.

"If the boys *did* do it," said Nell, that next morning, "it was mean of them, and I don't see how I ever could forgive Chick for frightening me so."

"It was possible for one of them to get into the window, I suppose," answered Jannet, "and you remember that there was a short time before we got to their door. Jan could have let himself down from

the balcony and gotten into his own window in a jiffy. Perhaps he could have thrown the light on the wall in some way, and he certainly could have made those noises, only I scarcely see how they could have come from the direction they seemed to come from unless Jan knows how to throw his voice."

"I'm sure that he doesn't," said Nell. "*I* think that it was Paulina!"

"*That* could be," said Jannet. "She looked awfully queer, and she had heard it all, and she wanted us to think that it was 'Her.' But I can't imagine why she would do it. She is so mortally sensible and matter-of-fact about everything else."

"That's the very kind," insisted Nell. "I don't think that Paulina is so very smart; besides, Jan and Chick say that she is 'queer in the bean'."

Jannet laughed at this expression. "That sounds like Jan. He has all sorts of slang for every occasion. But I'm not so sure. Paulina may have been scared by things like this long before any of us came here, and you know how stories grow. I'm going to talk to Paulina myself. I'm not going to let this go and not try to find out about it. I may talk to Uncle Pieter, too, but not yet."

"Your courage is not quite up to that yet?" laughed Nell.

"Not quite, Nell."

The girls did not have a chance to see how the

boys looked and acted that morning, for Paulina called them so late that they missed the boys altogether. Chick had gone home, to meet Jan at the train later, and Mrs. Holt had driven off with Jan, intending to do some errands for him before he started back to school. The maid who helped Paulina gave Nell and Jannet a good breakfast, after which Nell rode home, warning Jannet in farewell not to "do anything rash."

Jannet, bare-headed, stood in the rear of the house, waving goodbye to Nell. Then she slowly sauntered up the path which led to the pergola, under her own windows and those of the room in front. "I'm going in there first," she said to herself.

Accordingly, she decided to get permission from headquarters, and as she had seen her uncle go into the house a short time before, she crossed the court to the rear of the new building and entered it. Her uncle was just coming out of his library when she met him.

"Uncle Pieter," she began, and he stopped in front of her with the air of being in a hurry. "Excuse me, sir,—but I have just one little question."

Mr. Van Meter smiled a little. "Well, Jannet, you need not be afraid to ask it. I'll not bite."

This made Jannet feel more at home with him and she laughed. "Uncle Pieter, do you care if I go around the old house and find out all about it? I'd

like to go into some of the rooms and into the attic, too, perhaps."

"You are not afraid of Paulina's ghosts, then?"

"Not so very."

"Go anywhere you please, my child. Get the keys from Diana, or from Paulina. I'm rather pleased that you should take the interest."

"Oh, *are* you, Uncle Pieter? Thank you *so* much. I'll not hurt anything."

"From what I have noticed about you, I feel sure that you will not. And Jannet, I have been wanting to talk to you about the plans for our summer and other things. Come into the library after supper. No, there will be some people here. I will see you tomorrow morning about ten o'clock."

"Yes, sir," Jannet replied, and Mr. Van Meter hurried on his way down the hall, into the back entry and outdoors again.

Her uncle had confidence in her then, and he had noticed her, and she could go anywhere,—hurrah! Jannet felt like performing a jig then and there, but somebody might see and be shocked. It would be better to reserve such performances for her own room, whither Jannet sped immediately to think out the campaign.

First, where were the pearls? Who had taken them? Second, who had played the part of ghost? Why? Or was there such a thing as an unhappy

ancestral spirit that wandered around at times? This was not the first time Jannet had asked herself these questions, and now once more she examined her desk, going over every inch of it to make sure that she had not omitted any secret drawer, had not missed any little spring. Again she opened the drawer where the lovely case and pearls had lain. Regret was almost a pain when she saw it so empty.

It certainly *could* not have been her uncle, though it was possible. How about Paulina? Cousin Andy, —impossible! Cousin Di, likewise impossible. Yet the pearls were gone. Could her uncle have taken them out by a sudden thought of surprising her with them some time? He might think that she could not have found that most secret of drawers. Jannet exhausted in thought the whole range of possibility. Perhaps some one had seen her open the drawer,—from the balcony! But her back was toward the balcony,—no, she had put on the necklace and gone to her mother's picture and around the room.

But who would climb the balcony, other than Jan or Chick or some other boy? Perhaps a burglar,—yet nothing else was missed, to her knowledge. It certainly was a mystery. Perhaps she would tell her uncle the next morning. Jannet rather dreaded that interview. For she was used to ladies, her teachers, and knew scarcely any gentlemen except the lawyer

in Philadelphia, Lina's father, and now these relatives.

After her musings and searchings at the desk, Jannet went all over her room again, looking closely at the paneled walls, and examining the chimney and mantel. She even ran her hands down the boards, to see if there were a spring, and again peered among the sooty bricks inside the great chimney. There was a small closet at one side of the chimney, where tongs and shovel or any necessary paraphernalia might be kept. This was clean and bare and gave no evidence of an opening.

Thinking it likely that Mrs. Holt might be back by this time, Jannet went by the long corridor to where Mrs. Holt slept, but there was no answer to her knock. Then she wandered downstairs again; but Cousin Diana was doing errands and did not get home until after dinner. She was in fine spirits, telling laughingly things that the boys had said before their departure and displaying to Jannet some of the pretty articles which she had bought.

Jannet went with her to her room to help her with her packages. "Did the boys tell you to ask Nell and me if the ghost walked last night?" queried Jannet on an impulse.

"Why?" quickly returned Mrs. Holt. "Were they playing tricks on you and Nell?"

"We think that perhaps they were."

"I heard what Jan calls the 'Dutch Banshee,' " said Jan's mother, "but I imagine that it is only the wind, whistling in the chimney, or in some odd corner. You don't worry about ghosts, do you Jannet?"

"No, Cousin Diana. And that makes me think of what I wanted to ask you this morning. I want to poke around a little and see everything, and I asked Uncle Pieter if he cared. He said he didn't and that you or Paulina would give me keys. I'd like to see again the front room on my hall, and the attic, too, and anything else that is interesting."

"I used to like to poke around in attics, too," said Mrs. Holt, "but I outgrew that long before I came here. Perhaps there are boxes of your mother's in the attic, and there may be chests of bygone ancestors,—who knows? But you wouldn't want *me* to go there with you, would you? I'm not fond of cobwebs and low ceilings to bump my head."

How nice Cousin Di was! She knew what girls liked to do. "Oh, no," said Jannet, "I'll go by myself. I would love it if there were old chests and trunks that I could look into. But they would be locked, too, wouldn't they?"

"I suppose that they will be."

Cousin Diana went to her desk and soon handed to Jannet a jingling bunch of keys marked "Attic Keys." "There are more of them than I recalled.

Keep them as long as you want them, but lock everything up when you leave the attic, please, and elsewhere, too."

"I will," promised Jannet, receiving more keys.

"Not many of the help are in the house at night, but any of them might take a notion to rummage around there by day; and while there can not be anything of any great value there, we do not want to lose what has been thought worthy to keep. I feel a sense of responsibility, now that I am temporarily in charge."

"Has Paulina keys?""

"Yes, I believe so. I have never directed her to clean the attic."

"If Paulina wanted to, I don't believe that she would need to be directed."

Cousin Diana answered Jannet's mischievous look with a smile. "I see that you already appreciate Paulina," she remarked.

After leaving her cousin, Jannet went straight to the front room whose great fireplace was a duplicate of hers. Unlocking the door, she stepped inside, finding herself in a large, shadowy room, whose shades were down and whose furniture was draped in coverings. From these swathed chairs, perhaps, came that smell of moth balls.

A large mirror between two windows revealed dimly her own figure. Jannet put up the shades and

opened a window. She intended to look thoroughly for any evidences of the "ghost." Here was a possibility. Perhaps from this side there could be found some opening. There had been funny noises in that wall, at any rate.

But never did walls look more innocent. She scanned them closely.

There was a little closet which corresponded to the one in her room. Another, high and deep, corresponded to her clothes closet. They certainly were large closets, the depth of the big chimney, she supposed.

Jannet examined the walls of the closets and of the room. She even looked at the ceiling for a possible trap door, though how the ghost could have flown so quickly out of her own room she could not imagine. This was a fine old room, but it offered no solution of her problems, so far as she could see. One thing, however, confirmed her in her idea of some secret passage,—the space between the rooms, the size of that great chimney.

CHAPTER XII

THE OLD ATTIC

JINGLING her keys happily, Jannet went up the attic stairs, which led from the second floor back hall by a door not far from Paulina's room. More than once she had heard Jan and Chick clattering down the two flights, first the attic stairs, banging the door shut, then the back stairs from the second floor to the first. If *they* were not afraid to be up there, why should *she* be afraid of the attic?

She did wish for Nell, though on second thought she came to the conclusion that it was just as well for her to investigate alone first. There might be things that some one outside the family could not appreciate. Family was a big thing to Jannet just now. Had she not just acquired one?

Inserting her key in the lock of the door opposite Jan's den, she found that it did not turn anything in the right direction to unlock it. She immediately tried the door and found that it was already unlocked. "H'lo, P'lina," she said, for there was Paulina, bending over a small trunk, her own, without doubt. "Do

you keep some things up here, too? Aren't you afraid of the ghost?" Jannet was laughing as she spoke, but Paulina straightened up and favored Jannet with a stony stare. Then without a word she bent again and locked her trunk.

Jannet stood quietly, looking around at boxes and trunks neatly placed in this part of the attic, and at dim shapes further along, where boards had been laid over the rafters and lath.

"You ought not to be up here," hoarsely said Paulina at last. "I'm going now; come. I want to lock the attic door."

"I asked Uncle Pieter for permission," Jannet returned, "and Cousin Diana gave me these keys. I did not expect to find any one at all here."

Jannet dangled her keys before Paulina's eyes. "*Why* don't you think I ought to be here, Paulina? If there is anything wrong with the place, Uncle Pieter ought to be told."

"Your uncle knows all that he wants to know," replied Paulina. She frowned and was obviously displeased at Jannet's being there. Jannet wondered what she would have thought if Nell had come, too. But Paulina could just get over thinking that she could run everything.

At Miss Hilliard's school, Jannet was in the habit of obedience to her elders. Here, too, she respected the authority of her uncle and her cousins, but be-

yond them, Jannet's Dutch independence asserted itself.

"I'm sorry, Paulina," Jannet said courteously, "that you don't want me to be in the attic, but I have every right to be here and I shall stay. You need not be worried about anything of yours. I shall not touch your trunk, and if you will tell me what else is yours, I will certainly keep away from it."

But Paulina made no reply. She stalked out with her usual stiffness, leaving the door open.

"Of all the impolite people, you are the worst I ever saw," thought Jannet, but she did not say it aloud. Perhaps, after all, Paulina's silence was better than harsh words.

The field was Jannet's. What should she do first? She did not quite like to explore the dim recesses, beyond the wider, well floored part, when she was by herself. Perhaps she would reserve that till Nell could be with her. There was a window in this part, shut and fastened with a nail, loosely pushed in. Jannet pulled out the nail, raising, the old, small-paned window and finding that it would not stay up. But she saw a piece of wood that must have been used for the purpose and with this she propped the window, letting the fresh air in and also increasing the amount of light, for there was a calico curtain over the window panes, tacked to the frame.

It was quite neat here, not newly mopped or fresh as the other parts of the house were, but the floor had been swept back as far as the rows of trunks and chests extended. Jannet's eye was caught by an old single bed, whose length extended along one wall, away from the window. On this were bundles, of odd sizes, she guessed, from the different bulges in the old cover over the whole, a piece of yellowed, gay-figured percale, or muslin of a sort.

A rickety rocking-chair, of modern make, and a tall, gray-painted cupboard were the only pieces of furniture that Jannet could see. It was quite evident that her uncle had had all the valuable furniture of an older day put into use, keeping no useless articles to fill the attic. Even the old, old cradle stood in the old kitchen, not far from the old, old settle, with its rockers, too.

Jannet's eye, which had become practiced by this time among the so-called antiques, recognized something good in the narrow bed against the wall. That was an old-timer, too; but there was, perhaps, no place for it, or it was not quite ancient enough. Jannet lifted the gay cover to peer beneath. One bundle, newly tied in newspapers not quite covering the contents, showed comforters, put away now for the warmer season. Bundles of longer standing showed dingy in muslin covers.

These, surely, were not interesting. A long,

painted chest whose lock was broken, disclosed piles of extra sheets, pillow cases and other stores of the same kind, when Jannet lifted its worn lid. But the trunks were more attractive in possibilities, and Jannet tried to read the names or letters on their sides. Here was one that must have been her grandmother's and this big one had her mother's initials upon it. She would open that pretty soon. And oh, what odd little things those were in the corner, two square, black trunks, if you could call them that. They were more like boxes in size, but they had all the straps of a trunk. And if there wasn't a little old hair trunk under the two of them! It was a wonder that Uncle Pieter had not taken it down into the kitchen!

Jannet decided to open her mother's trunk and looked through her keys, trying several before she found one which would fit the lock. Her mother might have put away the contents just before her marriage, thinking that she would soon be home again to look them over. Jannet pulled the trunk out from the rest, opened the top and drew up the rickety rocking-chair, which she tried carefully before trusting herself to it.

Comfortably seated, with a few rays of the afternoon sunlight coming over her shoulder to the trunk, Jannet commenced her survey. There were all sorts of "cubbies" in this trunk. One in the very top of

the trunk opened down, when one loosened a leather strap from a button. But in this there were only a handful of flowers ripped from some hat, some pink roses, still very pretty, and a wreath of yellow buttercups and green leaves. Jannet decided to get a big sun hat and wear that wreath this summer.

In the top tray, two hats, perfectly good, but of a style impossible to wear now, occupied the compartment for hats, with several veils and more French flowers. Some letters were loosely packed in along the sides, with some foreign postcards, much scribbled.

In the compartment next, there were a pile of old music, some note books, photographs, more letters, and over all a sheer white organdy dress, washed but not ironed, and pressed in irregularly to fill the compartment.

Jannet lifted out this tray to find another beneath it. Ah, *here* were pretty things! Neatly folded, a light blue silk lay on top, covered with a linen towel. A lace and net dress was beneath this. Jannet did not disturb the folds. These could be examined when she had more of the day before her.

In the lower part of the trunk, Jannet found more pretty clothes and a box containing her mother's wedding veil. This, indeed, she drew out, handling it with a certain reverence. Yes, it was the veil in the picture, delicate, with rose point lace and the

pretty crown still as it had been worn except for the orange blossoms. These Jannet found lying in another box among the dresses. Dry and ready to fall to pieces at a touch, they were easily recognized, nevertheless.

Touched and silent, Jannet sat still for a few moments, the veil half out of the box in her hands, the little box with the orange blossoms open beside her. It was sad, but it was worth everything to have these things that made her mother so real, her pretty mother!

For a little while Jannet sat and read a few of the letters. It could do no harm. They were from girl friends, some of them to accompany wedding presents or to announce their impending arrival. "May you have a long and happy life together," said one. "Douglas is a dear. I had an eye on him myself, but it was of no use, with you singing the heart out of him!"

Girls then were much as they were now, Jannet thought. From her short span of years it did seem so long ago.

Pulling out her mother's trunk had disclosed a small box behind it, a pretty box of dark wood, stained and rubbed like the nice furniture of the house. The lock was of gilt, a little discolored, but the whole looked like something valuable, or at least interesting. Jannet tried all her keys without success

and then, without thinking more of the box, she went back to the trunk, becoming deeply engaged in the contents of a little pasteboard box which was full of funny notes and the treasures of her mother's younger days. There was even a tiny doll, dressed in a wee silken dress with a train. And in the bottom of the box there was a brass key,—the very one which might fit the little dark box. Replacing the pasteboard box, Jannet with some curiosity tried the key and found that it opened the other box.

A piece of old muslin covered the contents. This Jannet raised to find an old doll with a cloth body, some doll clothes, stained and faded and under these some doll dishes, carefully packed.

These could not have been her mother's. They were too old, too odd. Suddenly it seemed lonesome. Jannet began to feel nervous and depressed. She blamed herself for being a little goose, not in the least realizing that a sensitive girl of her sympathies could not help having her feelings worn upon a little by all this.

Jumping up from locking the little box again, Jannet closed the trunk which was proving to be such a treasure chest. She had scarcely disturbed part of it, and there were other delightful possibilities in prospect before her. She must have Nell over soon, for while she could go on by herself, and in a way she preferred to find her mother's things

by herself, still,—Nell was sensible, smart and good company. She would take an interest, too, in discovering any source of ghostly revels. If Nell were afraid, this part of the attic, at least, offered no signs of anything but ordinary storage.

Now, if she could only conciliate Paulina in some way and hear all that "old P'lina" thought about it. That was a good plan! She would try it!

CHAPTER XIII

UNCLE PIETER AS AN ALLY

PROMPTLY at ten o'clock the next morning, Jannet was waiting in the library for her uncle. She had timidly said at breakfast, "I will be in the library at ten, Uncle Pieter," and he had replied, "Very well, Jannet."

She had brought with her the little slip of paper which she had found in the book. If she had opportunity, she was going to sound him about it, or show it to him, provided she could screw her courage to the point. Just why she should be afraid of her Uncle Pieter, Jannet did not know, but he did not invite confidences. She was sure that he had not the least sentiment about him. But she was not ready to accept any gossip about him. She would find out for herself what sort of a man her uncle was.

As she sat there, thinking, in the midst of the books that lined the walls or stood out in their cases, she remembered what Miss Hilliard had once said in warning the girls: "Most of us are talked about from the cradle to the grave. Some of what

'they' say is true and a good part of it is not."

It was a quarter past ten when her uncle hurried into the library and hung his hat on a small rack. He was in riding costume and looked very nice, Jannet thought, a little like Andy. "I'm late, Jannet. Do not follow my example. I was detained, on an errand to the next farm. Now, let me see, what were we going to talk about?"

"I have ever so many things to talk to you about," soberly said Jannet, "but you had something, you said, about plans and things."

"Then we'll talk about 'plans and things' first," said her uncle smiling a little. He sat down by his desk, leaning back comfortably in a large chair there and motioning Jannet to a seat near him. For a moment he drummed on the desk with the fingers of his right hand, looking down thoughtfully.

"You may have wondered why I have not talked to you before," he said at last, "but it takes some time to gather up the history of fifteen years or so, and I have hoped that you might find out some things gradually and form the rest. I am not much of a talker.

"The particular thing that I want to ask you is whether you like it here enough to make it your home, whether you will consent to give up your school to be tutored, with some travel, and a few advantages that I think I can give you, or whether

you would prefer to go back to the other mode of life. It may be too soon to ask you this. If so, we can put it off." Jannet was surprised, and more at her own feeling.

"No, Uncle Pieter, it is not too soon. I felt as soon as I reached my mother's room that here was home. But you would not mean to cut me off from the people that have been so good to me, would you?"

"No, but I'd like to get you away from the eternal atmosphere of a school. I feel a responsibility, now that I know you are on earth."

"Why, do you?" Jannet's face lit up. Perhaps Uncle Pieter really liked her a little, too. "That is nice, but I had vacations, you know,—only I have never really belonged anywhere."

Her uncle nodded. "I thought as much," he said. "Understand that I find no fault with a school. But when I found that you had practically lived in one all your life, I thought it was time for something else."

Mr. Van Meter frowned and rubbed his hands together in a nervous way which he sometimes had. "How you came to be lost to us I can not understand at all. Why your grandmother did not notify us of your father's death is another strange thing. Surely her undoubted jealousy of your poor mother would not go that far."

"Oh, it didn't, Uncle Pieter! I have a little note that says she had written."

"And there was the matter of your grandfather's legacy. Have you had that?"

"No, sir. I have Grandmother Eldon's little fortune, enough to keep me in school. Then I thought perhaps I'd be a missionary."

Mr. Van Meter's frown changed into a smile. "I've no doubt you'd make a good one, Jannet, but suppose you try your missionary efforts here for a while."

Jannet met her uncle's eye. Actually there was a twinkle in it!

"At least it would be as well to stay with us until you are grown, Jannet, and we have a chance to clear everything up. Now your grandfather died before your mother did. That much is sure. We have a letter, or did have it, written by your mother the day we telegraphed about your grandfather's passing. Then we received sad telegrams and orders for flowers, for she could not come, though we told her that it might be possible to wait for the funeral till she arrived. Your father wrote, also. Then there was silence, Jannet, a silence so long that we did not know what to make of it.

"It was not so strange that Jannet would not write often to me, for I was so much older and your mother, too, thought that I was interfering and

dictatorial and I admit that I thought her impulsive and foolish. She thought that I did Andy a great injustice by my second marriage and matters were on an uneasy footing between us when she was married."

This was the first mention of the second marriage that Jannet had heard, but she kept herself from showing any surprise.

"But that there should be no communication," continued Mr. Van Meter, "was strange, particularly as I had written her that when she came home in the summer, we could arrange about anything she wanted and her own furniture. Father did an unusual thing, you see. He knew that he could not live a great while and while we had no inkling of that, for he was as active as ever, he divided the property, giving me the home place, giving Jannet another farm and certain bonds and securities which were sent her and which she received. Indeed, I sold the farm for her, with Father's permission, after he finally overcame all our objections and said that he preferred to see how we would 'carry on.' Yet both of us reserved certain funds for Father. Such was the arrangement, and a very poor one from a parent's standpoint, though Father was safe enough in trusting us.

"I had made a quick trip to Europe on business. My wife reported no letters from your mother on

my return. I wrote, and received word that they had moved. I found the new address after considerable trouble. No one was there. A new family had moved in. The word was that all had died of the 'flu' or something of the sort. I heard several conflicting stories. The one nearest the truth, according to what I found out about you, was that your father, half ill, started East with you and that your mother died at the hospital, either before or after that time."

"He told Grandmother that my mother had died," Jannet supplied.

"I see. There is only one thing, Jannet, that has made me feel strange about it all, and that is a telegram that I found after a long time. Date and address were torn off. Some one in the household had made a mistake. It blew at my feet from some pile of rubbish back where it is burned."

Mr. Van Meter pulled out a drawer in his desk and took from it a piece of yellow paper, such as is used in telegrams. He handed it to Jannet.

"If you feel so I can never again set foot in your house." This was the message that the surprised Jannet read. She looked up into her uncle's face in inquiry.

"Why, that reminds me of a slip of paper that I found in a book. Perhaps just your not replying to something may have made her send the telegram."

"I did not think of that. I was away,—what was the slip of paper?"

Jannet handed to her uncle the slip which she had found. He frowned over it, reading it more than once and looking off into space as if trying to recall something. "I never saw that before, Jannet," said he, handing it back to her. "This looks pretty serious, Jannet. It looks as if you owe to some unfriendly hand the fact that your mother was so separated from us and that you have been among strangers since your grandmother's death."

"Do you think that my mother could possibly be alive somewhere?"

"Of course I do not know the date of this telegram, but the word of her death seemed so clear that I never tried to trace the telegram after finding it. I would not cherish such a possibility, Jannet. Wherever she is, in that other world that she believed in, she will be glad that you are here, and I am glad to have an opportunity to make up to you what I seemed in her eyes to lack." Mr. Van Meter spoke kindly, but a little bitterly at the last.

"Oh, I *believe* you, Uncle Pieter!" cried Jannet, stretching out a slender hand to him. He took it, patted it and let her draw it back as gently as she had given it. Then Jannet drew her chair closer and said, "Now may I take time to tell you what has been happening?"

"Yes, child. What is it?"

One entering the library would have seen an interesting picture for the next half hour. The eager Jannet leaned on the desk with both elbows, and a bright face rested between her two hands as she related to her uncle every detail of her ghostly experiences and told him all about the pearls. She was utterly forgetful of herself and her fear of her uncle. Indeed, that had left her for all time.

Mr. Van Meter, thoughtful, as always, listened, smiling a little from time to time, for Jannet told it all in her own vivid way, amused herself, at different times, especially when she told of how she and Nell listened at the boys' door and of how funny Paulina looked in her night-cap.

At the close of the recital, Mr. Van Meter questioned her further about the pearls, as that seemed to be the most serious feature of the matter. "I feel sure that you will find Jan at the bottom of the ghost affair," he said. "Of course, you could scarcely offend Paulina more than to express your disbelief in the family ghost. But if you and Nell want to investigate, you have my full permission, so far as you keep within safe bounds. I gather that the ghost has not offered to harm you in any way?"

"No, sir, even if it did want my comforters."

"I fancy that there will not be any more ghostly visitations till the next time Jan is home, but let

me know if there is one. I should like to enjoy it with you."

Mr. Van Meter spoke so seriously that Jannet looked at him doubtfully. It was hard to tell what Uncle Pieter meant sometimes. But he wasn't such a riddle as "Old P'lina," anyhow.

"Well, don't you think it possible, Uncle Pieter, that there is a secret passageway of some sort?"

"It is entirely possible, Jannet. I had no work done by the carpenters about the old chimney, though it was pointed up and had bricks renewed at its top. I am too busy now to do anything, but later I may be of some assistance. By the way, Jannet, did you know that Andy mounted a horse and rode with me quite a little? All at once his back seems to be better. The doctors said it might be so. Do you like Andy?"

"Oh, yes, Uncle Pieter! No one could help loving Cousin Andy."

It was not until Jannet had left the library and her uncle that she recalled one thing which she had forgotten. She had not asked him how he had discovered her. But her doubts about her uncle were at rest. He was a peculiar man in some respects. Jannet felt that he was ashamed to show the least emotion, but she was sure that he had some feelings for all that. She might never love him as she could love her cousin Andy, but she respected him. More

than ever Jannet felt herself a part of her mother's family.

Hurrah for Jannet and Nell, the famous "deteckatives," she thought, and before dinner she telephoned Nell to see how soon she could come over. "I've got lots of things to tell you, Nell," she urged.

"I'd love to come to-day, Jannet," Nell replied, "but we have company. I was just going to call you to see if you could ride over this afternoon. Can't you?"

"Why, yes, I can, so far as I know now. I'll call you later."

Thus it happened that attic investigations were postponed; but the detective-in-chief sought an interview with one of the main "suspects" as soon as she could.

CHAPTER XIV

JANNET AND "OLD P'LINA"

MR. VAN METER had advised silence on the matter of the pearls, but told Jannet to report to him if she suspected anyone in particular. "Your Cousin Di is above suspicion, and as for Andy and me, I can assure you that we have not acquired any pearls of late. As to Paulina, I could scarcely imagine such a thing. Drop into the kitchen and get acquainted with the cook, Jannet, and the maids, in a natural way."

Jannet remembered this, but it was not natural for Jannet to drop into a kitchen, no matter how much she wanted to do it. Such things at school had been expressly forbidden, and at the Marcys' the members of the family were the cooks. However, she braced herself for the effort and pleased the black cook beyond expression by appearing at the outside door after a canter and saying, "Seems to me I smell something awfully good, Daphne. Don't tell me that you are baking a cake!"

"Come in, come in, Miss Jannet. How come you

ain't been here befo'?" The shining chocolate-colored face beamed and white teeth shone, as fat Daphne, so inappropriately named, hastened from the stove to pull up a chair for Jannet. "Jes' you wait, honey," and Daphne's fat figure shook as she hurried back to the oven door and opened it with the dish towel in her hand.

"Yum, yum," said Jannet, as a big pan of ginger cookies, the big, soft kind, was drawn out and the savory odors were wafted her way.

"Has Ah got cake foh suppuh? Sho Ah has! But sumpin' mus' atol' me to mek cookies." Deftly Daphne took the hot cookies from the pan with a pancake turner and set the brown crock, into which she put them, before Jannet on the table.

This was fine. Jannet daintily took hold of one hot cooky and dropped it immediately, which amused Daphne very much. But that lady was pulling a second pan from the oven and hurrying to put other cookies, rolled and cut and laid in similar pans, into the hot oven. "Git a sauceh f'om the pantry, chile. Them cookies will be cool in a minute."

The big kitchen of the new part was not very hot, though the day was warm. A pleasant breeze from a window near Jannet ruffled her fair hair and cooled her. She watched Daphne, as the last of the dough was rolled out upon the board and the cookies cut in different shapes with the cutters. There were plenty,

and she would eat all she wanted in such a hospitable atmosphere.

Daphne only wanted a listener and began to tell Jannet how she was descended from the slaves that the Dutch settlers had in the old days. "Yaas'm, Ah is practicably a membeh of de fambly. Ma fatheh, he done got lonesome, foh ain' many colohed folks around heah. So he went to Gawgia, whah a cousin lived, and he ma'ied ma motheh an' Ah lived in Gawgia. But Ah come back. Yaas," chuckled Daphne, "Ah wanted to see whah ma fatheh come f'om, an' yo uncle Pieteh, he put me right in de new kitchen."

Daphne dropped her voice, looked around and rolled her eyes mysteriously. "His secon' wife, she was fussin' about havin' things the way she wanted 'em, an' Paulina, she ain' none so easy to git along with, but ma motheh, *she* was cook in a *big place* in Gawgia, so they seed Ah could *cook,* an' they lef' me *do* it. Has you seen dat slick-headed gal Paulina takes around to help her clean?"

"Oh, yes, of course, Daphne. There are only the two maids."

"She went away when yo' uncle's second wife lef', but back she come in about a month an' Paulina got yo' uncle to take her in again. She's allays talkin' —don't like country, don' like country, but she stays,

an' Hepsy says that Paulina lets her keep a box in the ghos's attic!"

Again Daphne's eyes rolled and she made deprecatory gestures with her capable hands and the towel, as once more she bent to the oven.

Jannet, her mouth full of delectable, warm cooky, thought that this was growing more interesting. "She helps clean Jan's den sometimes, doesn't she?"

"Yaas'm, but Ah doesn't think Paulina likes huh. Sometimes Ah thinks she's got sumpin' on Paulina. Anyhow Ah hea'd yo' cousin Jan ask Paulina that once. Ah didn' know what he meant at fus'."

"That's modern slang, Daphne," laughed Jannet. "Jan's a great boy. Where are the girls, anyway? I haven't seen them around."

"Takin' they aftehnoon off."

"I see. Well, I do thank you Daphne for letting me have the *grand* cookies and not minding my bothering you. I'll run along now."

"Yo' ain' no botheh no way. Come in any time. Oh, say, Ah'll be frostin' mah big cake in about an houah. Don' yo' want to tas' the frostin' out o' the pan?"

"Yes, I do, Daphne. I'll be back to lick the pan all right!"

Laughing, Jannet ran out of the back door again and around to the back of the old house. Already

she had a point or two. The girl Vittoria, a harmless-looking, slim young woman, with small black eyes and a smooth black bob, revealed when her cap was off, was frequently about the halls of the old building, dusting, or doing some other legitimate work. She had been here, perhaps, that summer when the telegram,—no, she must be getting crazy. That was too long ago. Vittoria was too young,—but *was* she so very young? How long ago did this separation between her uncle and his wife occur? Cousin Di could tell her. She would overcome her hesitation to ask these questions, since it was not curiosity that prompted her.

But it was Daphne that told her, when she went back to the kitchen for the frosting, just in the "nick o' time," Daphne told her, handing her the pan with a generous leaving of the soft white mixture. Daphne had been thinking, too, and wanted to ask Miss Jannet about the ghost in the old house and if she had seen it. No, she had not seen it, exactly, Jannet told her, but she had heard what Paulina *said* was a ghost.

"Ah nebbah hea'd it but once," impressively said Daphne, raising her two black hands, "an' once wuz enough! Befo' they tuk the wings off'n the ol' house, Ah slep there one time; an' in the night,—whoo! sich a screechin' as Ah hea'd! Ah puts mah haid undeh mah kivehs—an' Ah stuffs mah fingehs in

mah eahs, an' Ah *nevah knowed nuthin' mo' ontil mawnin'*. But Ah nevah let on Ah was skeered outside de fambly! A no-count hand oveh at Clyde's sez to me, 'Ah hea'd yo' wuz skeered by yo-alls' ghos' odder night, Daphne,'—an Ah sez to him, 'Huh,' Ah sez, 'ain' nuffin to skeeah a pusson 'bout *ouah fambly ghos','* and Ah puts mah haid high an' walks off!"

"I'm glad that you are loyal to our family, Daphne," said Jannet. "How long is it since my uncle's second wife went away?"

"'Bout two yeahs. Yo' uncle, he put up with it foh a long, long time. She'd have what Paulina called 'hysterics,' but I calls plain tempeh. They wuz maghty still about it and Paulina, she would git the camphire an' things an' go an' tek keeah o' Mis' Van Meteh. Sich goin's on! An' Vittoria sez that a ghos' sobs an' ca'ries on jis lak her now."

"Why, is she dead, too?"

"Yaas'm, Ah s'pose so. Yaas'm, she mus' a passed away."

It was a sad subject, but it was all that Jannet could do to keep her face straight at Daphne's mournful shaking of the head that accompanied her last remark.

"It's all too bad, Daphne. I feel sorry for Uncle Pieter."

"Yo' uncle, he is a ve'y high-handed man, but ev'body in his house gits well paid."

Here was one tribute to Uncle Pieter, at least. Jannet ran off to her room carrying a large piece of cake which Daphne had insisted on cutting for her, saying, too, that the cake would be cut before being served anyhow. The first adventure had been a pleasant one; but how would she fare with Paulina, whom she intended to "beard" in her room that evening? Unless she were shut out and the door locked upon her, she would have a talk with Paulina about the ghost and anything else that seemed important. Perhaps Paulina could recall that time when Uncle Pieter was away and the telegram came. There was no use in hesitating, or in waiting. She might be asking questions of the very "villainess" who would take advantage of her to conceal the truth, but one had to risk something.

Out of the confusion in Jannet's mind, facts about the family were taking shape. For her uncle's sake she would like to find out who had prevented him from receiving the message from his sister, though she believed what he had told her. But nothing could make any difference now to her mother, and since Uncle Pieter had found her at last, she would try to make up to him for the old misunderstanding, as he had promised to make up to her for the years without a family.

Then there was the very important matter of finding out who had taken the pearls, or, at least of re-

covering them, if possible. To stop the nonsense about a ghost and to prevent the repetition of such annoying disturbances made another of Jannet's purposes. She, too, suspected Jan, yet Paulina might have had a hand in it, and how about the maid, Vittoria? If she had a box in the old attic,—well, *that* was to be considered. And all other things aside, how *thrilling* it would be to discover some secret passage and perhaps find out why it had been made. Jannet could scarcely wait for Nell's company to go away. She made an occasional trip to the attic, but did nothing except peep into one or more of the trunks.

Evening came. As Cousin Andy had once said, when the Van Meters had anything to do they did it, and in that spirit, Jannet brought herself to knock upon Paulina's door.

Paulina opened it a crack and looked out with the expression of "who wants me now?"

"May I come in, Paulina?" softly asked Jannet. "I just want to see you a minute."

Paulina hesitated, but was taken by surprise and had no good excuse ready. "Well, come in, then," she said, rather ungraciously, opening the door widely enough for Jannet to enter.

"I'll not stay but a few minutes, Paulina, if you are busy. I suspect that you are glad to get to yourself after a day of looking after other people."

Jannet helped herself to a chair, a straight one as uncompromising as Paulina looked. But Jannet's introduction implied some appreciation of Paulina's work, and Paulina's face relaxed a little from its stoniness.

Jannet kept right on, not looking around Paulina's bedroom, though she could see how clean and plain it was, just like Paulina. "I haven't had any chance to talk with you, Paulina, about things; and as I am going to make my home here, there are some things that are important, you know, like whether my dear room is safe or not and everything like that. You know that I didn't enjoy that last queer time a bit. There was some one in my room, Paulina. Ghosts don't pull comforters off from beds."

"That is just what our ghost does."

"Honest, Paulina?"

"Your own mother told me that once, but I never knew of its being done to any one since I have been working for the family and that is many a long year. Your mother knew something about the history."

Paulina was sitting back in her one rocking chair, her arms folded, her face almost expressing enjoyment. Good. Jannet felt that she had struck the right vein,—to come *asking* about ghosts rather than announcing disbelief too decidely.

"What did mother tell you, Paulina?"

"It is too long ago for me to remember, but she

told me the old story about the Van Meter ghost that clanked a sword and pulled the comforter from a bed and scared the Tory soldiers in the days of the Revolution."

"Why, I feel flattered to have the ghost come back to me after so long. Does Jan know the story?"

"Yes. I told him."

"H'm. But I can't understand about the *blue comforter,*" meditated Jannet. Paulina did not follow her thought, naturally, and waited. "But you have talked about 'Her,' Paulina. Who was she?"

"One, the one I mean, was mourning, after her husband was killed in the war, and pined away. The dog howled and the wind blew and there was queer music in the air the night he was killed and she got up from her bed and walked all over crying. The other I don't know, but it sounds the way your uncle's wife carried on. Somebody has told you about her, I suppose."

"Yes," said Jannet, glad that Daphne had told her. "Did you see the light in the wall, Paulina, that night?"

Paulina surprised Jannet by leaning forward with a startled look. "Was there a light in the wall, too? That was in your mother's story about the Revolutionary times."

"I'm not sure just where the light was, Paulina, whether it was in the wall or on the wall, but part of

the time it looked as if it shone through something. All I could think of was a secret passageway between my room and somewhere, but I can't find it. Say, Paulina, who goes into the attic besides you and me?"

"I let Vittoria keep a box there. It is the one with a padlock. She is saving up her money and you must not say a word about it, because she is afraid it will be stolen."

"Why doesn't she take it to a bank?"

"She will some time. Now do you know everything you came to ask?"

"Yes, Paulina, and I beg your pardon if you do not like it. But I had a talk with Uncle Pieter this morning and,—oh, yes, I forgot one thing. I found out that a letter and a telegram came for Uncle Pieter from my mother long ago, after he had gone to Europe, after my grandmother's death. Do you remember anything about it? He did not know about them, of course, at the time. Who was here, then?"

"All the rest of us; Andy, though, was on a visit. He never stayed with his stepmother if he could help it. Vittoria was here. Mrs. Van Meter had her since she was fifteen or sixteen. Vittoria isn't as young as she looks." Paulina thought a moment, her stolid face looking more intelligent than usual. "I can't remember any letter, but I do remember

answering a telegram for Mrs. Van Meter when she was beginning one of her conniption fits over nothing that I could see. Vittoria brought her the telegram and she read it. Her face got all red and she stamped her foot. 'The idea! The idea!' She said, 'what do we care? Oh, I'm going to faint, Vittoria. Help me to the davenport, Paulina!'

"I told her that I guessed she could get there by herself, with Vittoria there, and I ran for the stuff we used when she went into hysterics. When I came back, Vittoria took it from me and told me to attend to the man that brought the telegram out from the village. Something was wrong with the telephone. He was impatient and pretty soon I went to the door to ask Vittoria if Mrs. Van Meter wanted to send a reply back.

"But Mrs. Van Meter sat up, then, all wild, and still mad. Then she told me to write an answer. 'Say "No use," Paulina, "No use," and sign it "Van Meter"!' Then she went off into her hysterics again. I sent the answer, of course; and when the man asked where to, I told him I didn't know, but to fill it out to wherever the telegram came from, and he said he would. He told me how much it would be and I paid him."

Paulina stopped and Jannet sat quite still for a moment. Then she rose. "Thank you, Paulina, so much, for all that you have told me. I have told

Uncle Pieter that I will make my home with him and not go back to school next winter, so I hope that you will like me at least as much as you do Jan. I'll try to be as good as possible myself, but I have a lot to learn, I suppose. Did you like my mother, Paulina?"

"Yes," bluntly replied Paulina, looking uncomfortable.

Jannet was only too thankful to have escaped anything unpleasant. She did not mind Paulina's lack of sentiment, though she rather felt that she had shown a little too much. She really was *not* silly, she told herself, as she walked away from Paulina's door.

Paulina's surprise and interest could not have been feigned. She did not know about the lights, then. *She* had not staged the performance. And now she had the answer that had been sent, she felt, to some telegram which had preceded the one which her uncle had found. But Jannet scarcely knew how she would tell him this story, about his wife. Perhaps she could write it to him,—no, that would not do at all! Perhaps he would ask Paulina, then, at her suggestion. That was it.

A telephone call to Nell elicited the information that the company had gone and that Nell could spend the afternoon any time that Jannet wanted her. When Mrs. Holt was later consulted, she suggested

that Jannet ask Nell to come to spend the day and night with her. "Your uncle, Andy and I are invited to a grown-up affair to-morrow night, Jannet, and we'll be home very late, it is likely. I don't want Andy to miss it, for it will do him good to get out as much as possible, instead of thinking too much. I am going to get his sweetheart here this summer, Jannet, and now that he is so much better perhaps he will be reasonable, especially when he finds that she still cares for him.

"Paulina will get supper for you and Nell and herself and we'll let Daphne and the maids look after themselves. Daphne will be glad to get off."

So it was arranged, very quickly, that Nell was to stay with Jannet again.

CHAPTER XV

LOCKED IN THE ATTIC

THE next morning was rainy. Nell came over to the Van Meter farm between showers, but late, and Jannet declared that it was a shame how much it rained in the country, where it ought always to be bright.

Nell laughed at that and told Jannet that nothing would grow for them without the rain. "We have nothing but good showers, Jannet, mostly, at least. Besides, what fun it will be up in the attic, listening to the 'rain upon the roof.' "

"That is so, Nell, and it will be cooler up there, too, if it rains."

Jannet led the way to the attic as soon as Nell had laid aside her raincoat. Rather timidly Nell entered, when with a flourish Jannet threw open the attic door. "Behold the mysterious abode of ghosts, and our ancestral treasure house!"

"Well, it *looks* innocent enough, Jannet!"

"It certainly does, but back in the shadows beyond our ghosts may have their lurking place!"

"Don't, Jannet; you give me the creeps!"

"All right, Nell, we want to have lots of fun today. I'm crazy to show you some of the things I've peeped at, and I hated to get out too much, too, without somebody after me. But we'll have no interruptions this afternoon, with everybody away that would bother us, though Cousin Di, Andy and Uncle Pieter won't leave the house till a short time before supper. Will you mind if I get supper for us? Daphne will have everything ready."

"It will be fun, Jannet. I'll help you. You didn't know that I'm a very fine cook, did you? Honestly, Jannet, I'm learning to do *some* things very well, Mother says."

But while the merry tongues ran on, it was more interesting to get to business. Jannet pointed out some of the trunks and told what she had seen by peeping into them. Her grandmother's trunk was "sweet," she said; but she had felt almost as if she were opening a grave to disturb the things folded away so carefully after her grandmother's passing. It was different with her mother's, she felt, and a big trunk, old, but in good condition was full of old silk dresses and costumes that Jannet had only had time to discover, much less examine. "I'm a gregarious being, Nell, after being with such a lot of girls most of my life, and it wasn't enough fun to get these things out by myself."

Jannet opened the window and propped it as before. Fresh, misty air came in to sweeten the close attic atmosphere. There was only a gentle patter of drops upon the roof so close to their heads and Nell said that it was an ideal day for old attics. Jannet disclosed her plan, which was to see everything first that looked interesting and then after dinner to dress up in old costumes and explore the rest of the attic, unless Nell would rather not do that.

The big trunk came first in order. Jannet, with her big bunch of keys found the right one and opened it. She spread some papers, which she had brought with her, over the bulging top of the little bed and its bundles and upon the top of the large chest. Paulina's housekeeping was not to be criticised, but attics were very likely to gather dust. Then she began to take out the neatly folded garments, some to be looked at and laid aside on the papers, others to be exclaimed over. "O Jannet!" Nell exclaimed. "If your uncle gives these things to you, I'd fix some of them up and wear them, though it would be a pity to change them!"

But Jannet shook her head. "Uncle has a daughter, though I suppose that I have as much right to these things as any one. I may have some of mother's dresses fixed for myself, because I'd love to wear them, but these ought to stay as they are.

I wonder if we can't have a real costume party some day, Nell,—look here!"

Jannet held up and shook out a gay silk costume, with skirt, blouse, sheer and thin, and a laced velvet bodice. That was not very old, the girls thought. Perhaps Jannet's mother had worn that some time. There was a funny clown's costume and a velvet colonial suit in gray and blue, with silk hose and buckled shoes and a three-cornered hat. Jannet said that it was almost the prettiest thing there.

A gypsy outfit included a tambourine and when Jannet danced around over the attic floor with it, she stopped the performance to see Cousin Di standing in the attic door and laughing at her. The light clapping of Cousin Diana's hands was the only announcement of her presence.

"O Cousin Di, come in!" called Jannet, running to that lady and drawing her within. "*Can* we have a party and dress up some time?"

"You can and you may," promptly answered Cousin Diana, interested. She remained long enough to see some of the main treasures, telling the girls that they had found some excellent relics of a day gone by. While some of the costumes had been made for special occasions, most of the trunk's contents were dresses of former days actually worn by the women of the family. Gayly figured lawns and chintzes, light or heavy silks with queer waists and

sleeves and tight-fitting linings, trailed long lengths and voluminous skirts about the delighted girls. A square pasteboard box was found to contain a host of beads and other decorations used with the fancy costumes.

As Cousin Di had suggested that they dress up in something for dinner, Jannet declared that they would change the original plan and surprise them all by doing it.

Nell rather demurred at first. "Won't we feel silly, Jannet? And what will your uncle Pieter say to us?"

"I'm not afraid of Uncle Pieter any more, and he'll just see that I am doing what he gave me permission to do. I just love that ducky little silk costume with the blue velvet laced bodice. I think that it is a shepherdess costume and I think that Mother must have worn it. Would you like that?"

"No, indeed. That is just your color. I'll wear the gypsy suit."

"Fine, you carry the tambourine and I'll take the shepherd's crook if there is any." But Jannet did not find one.

Uncle Pieter was not at dinner, as it happened, which fact relieved Nell of the slight embarrassment she felt. Cousin Diana and Cousin Andy admired the result, though the costumes would have been considerably improved by pressing. Vittoria, who

waited upon the table, looked curiously at the girls, so pretty in their new characters, and Jannet caught one look that was not very friendly. Perhaps poor Vittoria was a little jealous. It must be hard not *ever* to be in things! But Jannet had too many pleasant things to think about to be disturbed by the opinion of Vittoria. Remembering what Paulina had said, Jannet asked Mrs. Holt after dinner how old she supposed Vittoria was. "Probably about thirty," said Mrs. Holt. "She is engaged to a young man who works in the village. I think that they are to be married as soon as he gets his house built. He is buiding it himself, as he has time, and hopes to finish it this summer."

The rain had stopped by noon. Jannet and Nell walked around outside for a little while and went into the kitchen to show Daphne their finery. Paulina gave them a comprehensive glance, but made no comment. Perhaps Paulina remembered times when those costumes were worn before this.

Lazily the girls rested in the swing for perhaps half an hour before they felt like returning to the attic. But by that time their pristine energy had returned. Jannet had a bright idea and collected cookies, then decided that fudge and lemonade would be good to take up with them, "so we'll not have to run downstairs every time we get thirsty, or hungry, Nell."

That seemed sensible. They spent some time making fudge, a little in making lemonade, and went up the two flights about two o'clock, the ice clinking in the pitcher. Nell had been advised to bring her flashlight, in case they discovered the perhaps imaginary secret passage, and Jannet had one which was a recent purchase. But they had so much fun dressing in the various garments and were so hot, that they drank up all their lemonade and went down again about four o'clock to make more. Not a soul was around, but the house was locked, they found. They washed off their dingy hands, for handling the trunks had soiled them, though they had managed to keep the dresses from being harmed.

After "splashing around" in Jannet's bathroom, they went to the kitchen, where they not only mixed fresh lemonade, but made sandwiches when they found that Daphne had left them some delicious ham in thin slices. "At this rate, Jannet, we'll not need any supper," said Nell, but Jannet thought that they would "after doing our real work of the day," Jannet said. And, indeed, the search was just to begin.

Into the far corners, under the eaves, soon went the flashlight rays. What they disclosed was innocent enough, chiefly cobwebs and dust. Shrouded shapes of the few old things left around lay here and there. Most of the central part was floored. In a few places the girls were obliged to be careful where

the boards seemed to be laid across loosely. Jannet said that the ghost had laid the track for itself, and Nell remarked that they could follow the trail, then.

Jannet had expected to see some evidences of some one's walking through dust, but the boards had been swept since she was first in the attic, she thought. "I tell you what, Nell, I ought to have done this right at first, before the 'ghost' had a chance to cover up her—his—its—tracks."

"Probably you ought, Jannet."

They were obliged to look out for bumps upon their heads in places, but finally they reached what was Jannet's chief objective, the great chimney between her room and the front bedroom. There were the bricks, rough and red. But that whole end of the attic was boarded off with a rough partition. "I *thought* so!" exclaimed Jannet. "Now for a door!"

But there was no sign of a door in the boards. Certainly, if there had been a secret passage there, it could not have been concealed, the girls thought. "If Jan or somebody got in your room, Jannet, it must have been by the window," said Nell.

"All the same," declared Jannet, "there is *something* in my wall. It may not connect with the attic. I suppose now that it doesn't. But I believe that if *we* can't find it out, Uncle Pieter will let a carpenter take away the panels on that side, to satisfy me, and himself, too. He looked awfully interested, Nell."

"The queer thing," said Nell again, "is that it all seemed to begin in the attic and then come nearer. Could it *really* be ghosts, that can go in or out of walls?" Nell half believed it, Jannet thought.

"What ghost would carefully take a blue comforter through walls and finally deposit it neatly, well folded, in the closet where it belongs?"

"Well," laughingly declared Nell, "Paulina told you that ghost *did* take one once, you said."

"Yes, she did," Jannet acknowledged.

It took some time to go over the attic, although if there were some connection between the attic and Jannet's room, it could only be in a certain part, the girls thought, and there they spent some time. They looked dubiously at various piles of boards not far from the partition. Some old carpet close to it Jannet with great effort drew aside till she could see how the floor looked at the angle. The girls grew a little tired. What was the use of doing it all to-day? Jannet suspected the big cupboard that stood against the partition, but their combined strength could not move it, and there was no indication of a way through it and the partition.

"Let's go down, have our supper, and give this up till to-morrow, Nell. We had too much fun dressing up first. Besides, we ought to have some one help us move the heavy stuff. I'll ask Uncle Pieter."

Nell, who was quite ready for something different,

assented. Gradually they made their way back to the trunks, though they did pause again to examine anything that seemed worth while to know about. If their hands had been soiled before, they were "filthy" with the "dust of ages," Nell declared,—"with all apologies to Paulina, Jannet."

Again jingling her keys, Jannet went to the door, which she had closed before they began their search in the other part of the attic, though why Jannet scarcely knew. Surely there was no one to watch them. "Why!" Jannet exclaimed, "it doesn't open!" She looked at Nell, startled. "Try it for yourself!" Nell shook the door and they looked at each other in dismay.

"Could Paulina have locked it by mistake?" asked Nell.

"Some one very likely has locked this on purpose," declared Jannet presently. The two girls stood by the door, puzzled, slightly alarmed. "This *is* a mess, Nell. It doesn't look as if I'd get you that good supper we were going to have."

"Perhaps we can call to some one from the window."

"Perhaps we can. But the tenant house is where all the evening activities are, unless some one has an errand here. Paulina said that she would be back about seven o'clock, unless she took a notion to go to prayer-meeting with her sister. They drive to

the village church. Daphne doesn't sleep here. No telling how soon the girls will come back,—but *who* locked us in, then?"

"Never mind, Jannet. We have cookies, the fudge and something to drink. Your guardian angel must have told you to bring those up. Do you suppose we'll have to be up here after *dark?*"

Jannet shook her head regretfully. "You be sister Ann, Nell, and watch the window for any one that might come. Paulina is the most likely one before dark, and it does not get dark early, fortunately. I'm going to see if I can't open the door. I will know enough to lock the door myself the next time I am up here, and leave my key in the lock on this side. That's what she has done, you see, and I can't get my key in. I left it on the ring with the rest, or—"

"You say 'she,'—how do you know that it isn't 'he'?"

"I don't know it, I just think it."

Nell asked nothing more but sat on a box by the low window, to watch like the sister of Bluebeard's wife. Jannet tried to poke the key, which was on the outside, and force it out, but with no success. Then she shook the door and called. "The trouble is," said she, "if Paulina hears a racket in the attic, she will think it the ghost, and Hepsy and Vittoria sleep over in the new part. But there is no use in

calling or going into hysterics over it. If the one who locked us in is here, very naturally she wants us to stay." Jannet thought of burglars, but did not mention that theory. It was bad enough for Nell as it was. She had heard the family car drive off some time before.

Jannet worked at the key, trying to force it out. She found a bit of wire and she used the smaller keys; but when one became wedged in so tightly that she had difficulty in getting it out again, she gave it up.

Nell did her best to be cheerful, but Jannet could see that it was an effort. She took Nell's place at the window and they ate what cookies and fudge were left and drank lemonade with less than their customary flow of conversation. It was, indeed, a gloomy prospect, that of spending the night in the attic.

CHAPTER XVI

A STRANGE NIGHT

THE girls had one sharp disappointment. They heard a few sounds below and called. Presently they saw a man walking from the back of the house and carrying two pails. Jannet called, and Nell, looking out over Jannet's shoulder, called also, almost in a panic for fear that they would not be heard.

"It's the man bringing the milk for morning," Jannet explained. "I had forgotten him. O Mr. Hoppel! Whoo-hoo! Whoo-hoo!"

Nell added to the pathos by shrieking "Help! Help!" She increased the fervor of her cries as the man kept right on, not even turning. Jannet learned afterwards that Mr. Hoppel was "as deaf as a post," but they did not know that at this time. Jannet had not yet brought herself to the point of crying "help," and felt that she was giving the enemy opportunity to rejoice over her by calling at all. But Nell thought that it was no time for pride.

"Suppose there's a fire," Nell suggested.

"Suppose there isn't," Jannet returned. "If there is, Nell, we'll take some of those sheets in the chest, knot them together, tie one end to the little bed, and let ourselves down through the window. I guess we could squeeze through, couldn't we?"

Plump Nell looked dubiously at the window, but decided that she could. Then she suggested that they try it now, but Jannet thought that it would be a needless risk, and that it would be hard to get started safely over a projecting part of a roof.

So far as they knew, no one else came within call. It began to grow dark. At one low growl of distant thunder Nell remarked that they were "in for it," a thunderstorm "in the attic." Jannet said, "Oh, no Nell, only outside," but Nell smiled only faintly at this.

Jannet, however, decided that it was time for some action before it grew too dark. Hopping up, she drew the cover from the small bed and rapidly removed its bundles to the tops of various trunks. "What are you doing, Jannet?" Nell asked.

"I'm going to fix a place for you to lie down if we can't raise anybody for a while.'

The bundles off, Jannet brushed and wiped with a newspaper, about the woodwork and the mattress which was covered tightly with muslin. Opening the big chest, she spread a sheet widely first, then laid on top a folded comforter. "There isn't the

sign of a spring, Nell, but you can pretend that we're camping."

Nell jumped up to help. Jannet spread on more sheets and a light comforter, though Nell protested that it would be too hot. The attic so far had not been too uncomfortably warm, for Jannet had found another opening at the other end, a round, glass window, which had given a circulation of air. But is *was* clouding up. In a storm they might have to close both openings. Truly this was "the limit," they both concluded. In a storm, who would hear them? Paulina would come home late and go to bed. The "folks" expected to be out late anyway, and if the storm was too bad, who knew when they *would* get home?

"Well, we'll be missed at breakfast anyway," said Nell. Jannet said nothing. They might be supposed to be over-sleeping. However, she'd get *somebody* awake in the morning!

It grew darker. Jannet fixed a comforter in the rickety chair for herself and drew it near the bed, for which she had even found a pillow in the chest. With the chair tipped back and her feet on a box, she would be ready to "enjoy the evening," she informed Nell. Neither said a word about a ghost, but Nell sat close to Jannet on the little bed and watched the shadows grow darker and darker till they swallowed up the dim light in the attic.

"Don't lose your flashlight, Nell," warned Jannet.

"Never!"

Both were startled a little later by a scurrying sound back under the eaves at a little distance. Jannet flashed her light in that direction, to find a bright-eyed gray squirrel sitting up as squirrels do, most surprised at the light. "Nell!" exclaimed Jannet, "that accounts for some of the noises in the attic, doesn't it? They are not rats, but squirrels."

Jannet had scarcely said this when there was a curious sound again. Something dropped, "tap, tap tap, tap." "A nut falling down some steps! And where are the steps?"

Jannet asked Nell if she had the nerve to go back in the attic with her again, but Nell said that she thought a squirrel had dropped the nut between the rafters or in the wall somewhere. "I heard a few scampering over the roof this afternoon," she added.

There was a sighing sound in the trees outside. More squirrels seemed to gather in the attic's far corners; but they were not tame enough to come near the girls, who concluded that it would be well to eat their last cooky and drink up the lemonade before they had any small visitors. Jannet was more nervous about the squirrels than Nell, who was used to them. A cool air blew through the attic now, but when the drops of rain began to blow in at the

window, Jannet bravely went back to close the other one. This they could watch.

"It was pretty spooky, Nell, creeping back there to shut that window, but I saw where the squirrels get in, not far from just over my room. I saw one cute little chap on a rafter."

The wind grew more violent and seemed to change direction, for no more rain came in at the window, though as yet there was little sound of rain on the roof.

But with the veering of the wind there began that weird sound which they had heard once before, and Jannet, half laughing, half startled, exclaimed, "The 'Dutch Banshee'! Nell, we can locate it!"

"Not I, thank you," said Nell, putting her head down into the pillow. But Jannet turned on her light and stood up, listening. Nell clung to her hand, but Jannet said, "I'm not forgetting, Nell, that I came to the attic to find out things. That sound is made somewhere here and the wind does it!"

"All right; if you are going anywhere, I'm going too. I'm not going to sit alone in the dark."

Following the sound, the girls carefully made their way back, flashing their lights into this corner and that, until they felt a little air blowing on them and saw a piece of brown sacking waving a little in a corner. "That is an awful place to get to," said

Jannet, "but I'm going. Turn your flash, Nell, on the rafters,—please."

"Wait," said Nell, interested now. "There are some boards. Let's put them across. You'll have to crawl there, it's so low, and you'll go through that unfloored place if you don't look out."

Jannet accordingly waited, while the tiresome task of placing boards safely across was undertaken. Then she crawled, in the light of her own and Nell's flashlights, till she reached the cranny from which the loud sounds were coming. She pulled aside the piece of sacking and made signs to Nell of her success. Nell wondered what she was doing, for she saw Jannet take her handkerchief from the little pocket of her now most dilapidated and dusty sport frock. But the wild shrieking stopped almost instantly, and Jannet, with a broad grin, turned around in her sitting posture, to hitch herself back on the boards.

"It's the funniest contraption you ever saw, Nell. It will pay you in the morning to crawl over there to see it. There is a bottle, and some wires are stretched across,—I left them as they were, but I stuffed my hanky in the bottle. It's that that whistled. So that is one thing that we needn't be afraid of, our 'Dutch Banshee'! Isn't that good! Hurrah for our 'ghos'es' that Daphne talked about."

Even Nell grinned at the discovery. She was less

afraid now. The "Dutch Banshee" was discovered.

Rather wearily the girls went back to what Jannet called the "respectable" part of the attic. "I'm going to stretch out, Jannet," said Nell, "though I am ashamed to take the most comfortable place."

"You needn't be. It's little enough I can do for my company,—starving her to death and entertaining her in the attic!"

Nell did stretch out upon the little bed, with its dark spindles, head and foot, and Jannet rather carefully disposed herself in the armchair. It creaked even with her slight weight, but did not break. It was of no use to watch for Paulina's coming. The storm was upon them and Jannet only hoped that none of the chimneys would be struck by lightning. It wasn't much fun to be in the attic in a storm. But the electrical part of the storm was not severe, though the rain poured in sheets and beat upon the roof till they thought it must give way somewhere. Thanks to Mr. Van Meter's care of his property, there was not a leak.

"I'm sorry for the poor folks," sleepily said Jannet after they had been listening to the rain without speaking for a while. But Nell was sound asleep and her hand limply fell from Jannet's clasp.

It was a relief to Jannet to have Nell asleep, for she felt much responsibility. She dozed off herself, but was awake at every different sound. The

situation, to say the least, was peculiar. Jannet speculated much about who had locked them in, in intervals of dozing.

Suddenly there was a sound at the door. Jannet was wide awake in a moment, nor was she much surprised by what followed. "The third time is the charm," she said to herself. "Enter the Ghost, if I'm not mistaken."

Slowly the key turned. Jannet fairly held her breath. The door was softly opened and closed. So much Jannet knew in spite of the rain, to whose drippings her ears were now accustomed.

Next, a faint shaded light showed, "so she won't trip on the attic floor," Jannet decided, but it was not pleasant. A ghostly white figure, showing dimly in the tiny light, moved from the door to the center of the space where the girls were. A low moaning began. "Her," thought Jannet, setting her teeth. "It isn't Jan, then, not this time. She's got a sheet over her."

But it was not a sheet, as Jannet soon saw, when filmy, scarf-like draperies floated out and the figure whirled past, moving back and forth, not far enough from the door for Jannet to risk darting between the Ghost and the exit, as she thought of doing, though it might seem to be deserting Nell to the enemy. But Jannet wanted freedom, and help to find out who was this ghost.

"What are you, most noble ancestress?" suddenly queried Jannet, trying to keep the mocking note from her voice.

At this the ghost retreated, for Jannet had descended from her chair, and Nell, startled awake, gave one cry and sprang up. "Come here, Nell," soothingly said Jannet, "it's only our family ghost, poor thing." Then she whispered, as Nell reached her, "get outside the door and keep it open for me; but if she is harmless, I may try to catch her."

"For pity's sake, don't!" whispered Nell, half awake. But she obeyed Jannet, running for the door as if a dozen ghosts were after her. The ghost started to follow, but as Jannet's very palpable figure put itself in the way, the ghost changed its mind and retreated still farther into the attic. Jannet began to follow it, slowly, but steadily, not using her flashlight but grasping it firmly in her right hand for use either in its legitimate line or as a weapon, should the ghost make attack.

The moaning increased and the occasional sobs, with writhings and bendings, as the ghost floated backward now. "Nice Ghostie,—does pretty dance for Jannet!" And suddenly Jannet flashed her light full on the figure, rapidly taking it in from head to foot. No shadow was this, to be seen through, and a very stout pair of low shoes were not well concealed under the filmy draperies.

Obviously the ghost was not prepared for a flashlight. Immediately the figure whirled about, the light disappearing as it was held in front of her. Jannet could see the faint light ahead on the floor, but she lost no time in following it. It was difficult, though, to make time without being familiar with the place in the dark and to illumine both the floor at her feet and the flying figure of the ghost, who knew where she was going. All at once Jannet stumbled over a pile of carpet and fell, scraping her elbow and losing hold of her flashlight, which fell somewhere with a crash.

"Nell," Jannet called, "lock the door on this side, and leave the key in it, and then come to me slowly, seeing that no one passes you. I've lost my flashlight."

Nell had heard the crash and now most thoroughly awake, she took the key which had locked them in, though Jannet had pressed her bunch of keys into her hand before, locked the door on the inside as directed, and came waving her flashlight from side to side. "Isn't a soul that I can see, Jannet," she said, "What has become of the ghost?"

"That is what I want to find out," said Jannet, rising from the pile of carpet, while the light played over it and beyond to a gaping hole. "Look!"

A push by the ghost had been sufficient to remove the old carpet from a trapdoor, which the ghost had

not had time to close. Somewhere in the depths she had disappeared.

Jannet brushed the dust from her hands and asked Nell to hold the light for her while she found her own. "It flew down after the lady you see. I hope that it is still fit to use."

"It probably isn't. Take mine."

"No, you keep it and light me down. If anything happens to me, you can find your way back and out."

"If anything is going to happen, you'd better not start."

"Very wise remark, Nell; but don't you want to find out about it?"

"Yes, I do. I'm so provoked at that ghost I could just—I don't know what! You *did* speak of a trap-door, but nearer the partition."

It was some little distance to the first step, but Jannet sat on the edge and let herself down without trouble to that. Several more steps in this very narrow space brought her to a tiny platform. On this her flashlight lay, apparently unharmed, for its light went on as usual. "All right, Nell. There's a sort of well with a ladder down one way, and I see a bit of light through a partition here." But even as Jannet spoke the light went out and she heard a rustle inside. Hurriedly she moved her light up and down to find a way of getting within. Ah, a harm-

less looking nail protruded. "Come on, Nell, we can get in, I think."

"But can we get out?"

"That is so. I believe that you'd better go and waken Paulina. I'm going on, but I may get caught somewhere, so you can tear the house down looking for me."

Nell hesitated. "Go on, Nell,—it is the only sensible thing to do."

Jannet was not particularly sorry, it must be admitted, to have the adventure by herself. She was not afraid now, for the ghost did not want her identity known. Why hadn't she told Nell to have Paulina take up the hunt with her? Perhaps Nell would think of it.

The sliding door here was easily found, though one not looking for it might not have thought of it, and might have concluded that the ladder was the way of a fugitive. Like part of a double door, a portion slid aside, for the apparent nail operated a spring. The opening was not large. Jannet stooped to enter where a musty smell met her, as well as a familiar scent of some sort of perfume.

Here was an odd little cubby to be sure, but the ghost had gone on. Jannet received an impression of a box of a room with a long shelf or berth running its length and something like a table in front of it. On this lay a thin scarf and a filmy dress with

yards of material lying in a mass. The ghost had left her costume, then. Oh, if she could only *catch* her! Yet Jannet's purpose did not include touching her.

Ahead was an opening, and Jannet had need to be careful of her steps, as she swung her light around the opening before her—to find stairs again! Oh, *here* was where the ghost had come down, in the wall of her room by the big chimney! It was a circular stairway, built in an unbelievably small space.

But Jannet was light and quick. In a moment she was at the bottom. Up and down before her again she swept the light. Good. There was a spring in plain sight. Now she knew how it was done, but she left the panel wide open behind her as she entered her own room, put on the electricity, and took the precaution to look hurriedly into her bathroom, into her closet and under her bed before she opened her door and dashed into the hall.

Jannet felt that she was too late, but she flew across the corridor which led into the new part and down the hall there to the room at the end where Hepsy and Vittoria slept. No light showed under the door. All was quiet.

Ordinarily Jannet was too considerate to waken any one in the middle of the night. But this time she thought that she had suffered inconvenience

enough to be excused, even if she wakened the wrong people. Firmly she rapped upon the door. At first there was no response. Jannet rapped again, though much inclined to give it up, now that she had time to think. Perhaps neither of the girls did this. *Could* it be Paulina after all?

But while Jannet was wondering whether to knock again or not, the light went on and the door opened. There stood Hepsy in her long white gown, her short hair done up in curlers almost like those of a fashion long gone by. This was how Hepsy achieved that remarkable effect, then.

Hepsy looked scared. "What's the matter, Miss Jannet?"

"Oh, nothing. I'm just looking for a ghost."

Hepsy looked more bewildered than ever. Jannet continued, "Where's Vittoria?"

"She said she was not coming home to-night,—but, but I wasn't to tell. Her beau was taking her to the movie and she always stays with one of the girls, I mean, she has done it *once* or *twice.*"

"Don't worry, Hepsy. I'm not concerned with whether Vittoria stays out or not. I just wanted to know if she were here. I'll tell you why to-morrow. Just go back to bed. I'm sorry I wakened you. By the way, what perfume does Vittoria use?"

"Why, why that's funny, I guess she uses mine

that my aunt gave me for my birthday. It's black narcissus." Hepsy spoke with much pride. "It's awful sweet. There it is on the dresser."

"If you don't mind, I'll take a sniff"; and Jannet ran into the room, then out again in a jiffy. "Thanks, Hepsy. You have helped me very much."

Quietly Jannet stole back, past Cousin Di's room, over into the old part once more. She found Paulina and Nell coming out of her room with anxious faces. For once Paulina did not look stolid. "Where have you been?" inquired Nell. "I had a time to waken Paulina, and then she had heard the ghost and wouldn't go near the attic, so we finally came to your room, to find the lights on, and you nowhere to be seen, and this panel open! Say, Jannet, I climbed up into that room, and Paulina after me!"

"Did you find the ghost's costume there?"

"No! What do you mean?"

"It was there, and when we find the one who has that, we'll find the ghost. Did you meet anyone in the halls?"

"Not a soul."

"I am terribly disappointed, then, though I feel sure that I know who it is."

"Who?" asked Paulina, silent until now.

"Perhaps I ought not to say surely till I actually find her."

Then Jannet asked what rooms were vacant and

where some one could hide, and she found that they had made a tour of them all, looking for her. "But did you look in Jan's den?" she asked.

Finding that they had not been on the attic floor at all, she asked them to follow her. Locking and bolting her door, she led the way to the attic by the new route of the secret stairs. It was true,—the filmy ghost dress was gone. Thoroughly they searched the attic, quietly, too, Nell standing at the attic door on guard. Then Paulina turned on the light in the upper hall by Jan's den and unlocked Jan's door. She understood dimly why Jannet had wanted to search the attic again, but she could not see why it was necessary to enter here.

Another disappointment checked Jannet's search. She felt so sure that the ghost would be found here, spending the rest of the night. The room was empty, so far as human occupancy was concerned.

Jannet stepped in and looked around at the evidences of Jan's mechanical turn of mind. But with a little exclamation she pointed to the bed. Some one had been sitting there, and there lay a tangled wisp of something on the floor, showing under the long cover which hung over the side of Jan's cot.

"She was too much in a hurry," triumphantly said Jannet, kneeling down on the floor and reaching under the bed. Nell, thinking that the ghost was found, drew back with a little squeal. But Jannet

drew out only the filmy mass of the ghost's dress.

Paulina quickly took hold of it with interest. "One o' your ma's dresses that she was some sort of a furriner with. Somebody else has been into the trunks, then!"

"I'm terribly disappointed, Paulina, for I thought that we would surely find her, after I knew that she had gone after her costume. Then I thought that she would stay in the house. I want to tell you, Paulina, that I went to the room where Hepsy and Vittoria sleep and that Hepsy is alone."

Paulina, stiff and dour, gave Jannet a look of understanding and nodded her head. "It may be," she said.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SECRET ROOM

DAWN was breaking when Paulina left the two girls, telling Jannet that she intended to watch for the return of Vittoria. Jannet persuaded Nell to lie down on her bed, but she was too highly keyed over the whole affair to feel sleepy. At a suitable time she would call Uncle Pieter and tell him about the discovery. Meanwhile she would go by herself to investigate that queer little box of a room.

Nell went soundly to sleep in a few minutes, feeling perfectly safe from ghosts now in Jannet's room. Jannet sat quietly at her desk until she was quite assured that Nell was asleep. Then she rose, picked up her flashlight and the "darling" candlestick with its white candle which always stood upon her mantel, a few matches upon its base, and started for the attic stairway rather than going by the panel. It might waken Nell.

The door of the attic stood open. Paulina, the neat, careful Paulina, had been too much excited to think of closing it! The trap door so near the parti-

tion also stood open. Jannet peered at a crack in the rough partition. Yes, there was the outline of where the top of the secret room stood above the attic floor on the other side of the partition. A pile of lumber, a few odds and ends of boards, rafters and even a few bricks were cleverly arranged to give the impression of waste material and nothing important, should anyone be curious enough to peep through. Now, where below was there room for the rest of the secret chamber? But Jannet recalled the long flight of stairs to the attic. Ceilings were high in the old house. She recalled, too, that the smooth ceilings of her closet and the one corresponding to it were quite low, perhaps to conceal any evidence of the circular stairs. The few steps down from the attic floor accounted for the secret room below such part of it as was raised above the attic floor, its outlines concealed.

Jannet could see a glimmer of light from the outside, when she looked down into the dark well where the ladder led to the ground floor at the very wall of the house. She recalled little jogs and irregularities downstairs, but could not place this for a moment. Yet from some cracks somewhere the morning sunlight came dimly through.

"The queer little tool house!" she suddenly thought. She had wondered why in the world that

had been inserted in a brick wall. It was shallow and Jannet remembered a sort of rude table that stood against its back wall, "probably concealing the entrance to this secret way," with its queer ladder nailed to the wood of the enclosure.

How thrilling it was! Cousin Diana, when she showed Jannet around had mentioned the tool house and let Jannet peep within when they came to it. "When the wings were built on, this was naturally sealed in," Cousin Diana had said, "but when Pieter took them away, he painted up the quaint entrance with its odd latch and open lattice." Perhaps the very ease of entering the tool house would make no one suspect a concealed ascent behind it.

She turned to the right and opened the sliding door, finding it more easily opened now that she knew how. She was surprised to find light here, and looking above, she saw a round window, or ventilator at the top of the room on the side of the house wall. This, doubtless, matched the other one in the attic. But it supplied little light, and she looked around for a place to set her candlestick. She sat it down on the shelf, which had most probably been provided for a narrow bed, and saw that a board or leaf hung down from the wall on hinges. The hinges were rusty, but still good and Jannet succeeded in raising the board and propping it with the stick at-

tached, which fitted into a place in the wall beneath. That was the table, then. It had held the ghost costume.

Jannet's imagination was working in good order. With a smile she lit her candle. "Now I'm 'captive' or 'fugitive,' back in the old days, and there is a price on my head, perhaps, and I haven't anything to eat,"—but Jannet's heels struck against something of tin that made her look under the shelf to see what was there. The room was perfectly bare except at this place, and Jannet saw only an uninteresting pile of pans and dishes in one corner, all covered thick with dust. An old wooden box, a wooden pail falling to pieces, and a tin or metal kettle of an odd sort stood in a row. Jannet could scarcely see, through the dust, that the "tin" kettle was of pewter. But Jannet did not like pewter things anyhow. Cousin Di had laughed at her for this distaste.

"He certainly kept everything under his bed," thought Jannet, in no hurry to touch the dusty things. But under the wooden box she saw the corner of something made of leather sticking out. With the tips of her fingers the stooping Jannet drew out a queer old portfolio. This promised to be of interest. Jannet decided to investigate it right on the spot, though she wished that she had brought a dust cloth.

But she sacrificed her clean handkerchief to the

cause and after blowing off some of the dust she wiped off most of the rest. Opening out the decaying leather, she found that one pocket had a few papers in it. There was a torn paper, conveying some property, that she thought would be interesting to Uncle Pieter, as she glanced at the old writing and the Dutch names. But what was this,—oh, how perfectly wonderful!

For the next ten minutes there was perfect silence in the box of a room, while the candle fluttered a little and Jannet, wrapt in what she was reading, almost lost sight of where she was. Many and many a long year before, some one had read those little notes tucked away in the old portfolio with as much interest and more anxiety. "Dere Father," ran the first that Jannet pulled from the sticky leather at the side. "It is hard to get the food to the attick without being seen. The Captin watches us or some one is there while we are cooking. But they watch my mother more than they watch me. I put the food on the stair and tapped, but you were asleep, perhaps. I heard a noise and I hastened to go up and closed the trap. There was no one here. Now I will drop this down quickly. It is a good thing that I keep my dolls in the attick. They let me play here. I was eating some bread and having my table spread for my dolls when the Captin looked within the door to see what I was doing this morning. I put my old

doll's head on the flagon of water and wrapped it in the plaid coat that Mistress Patience made for the doll that you brought from England." (And Jannet had found little dishes and dolls in the pretty box of dark wood, whose key had been discovered!)

No name was signed to this. It had been folded tightly to be dropped at the entrance, Jannet thought, for it was greatly mussed and difficult to read.

A small piece of paper with a large grease spot bore a short message. "I made these for you. Mother says that they are tasty."

"Probably doughnuts," smiled Jannet, looking at the grease spot.

But here was a longer letter and in another, older hand. It began without address, or was but a part of the entire message.

"I can only pray that you may not be discovered. Your rash act in opening the panel and entering the room where the captain was sleeping to get the covering, was successful in a way that you may not have considered. The captain did make a to-do about it when he saw that it was not a dream. The men will not go into the room nor will they go into the attic since the wind has been making music there. The tale is that a gaunt ghost, with a clank of sword, appeared by the bed and snatched the quilt from upon the captain. The door was locked and the guard outside saw no one, yet the quilt was gone.

For my sake, Pieter, do not be rash. I will continue to leave word of their movements. It will be safer to visit the attic now, I hope. Noises there are thought to be the ghost. Jannetje pretended to be frightened, but she can yet visit her dolls at times. No very good word comes from our troops. Our Tory neighbor doth rejoice in unseemly fashion for one who pretended to be our friend and he is oft at our door in converse with the captain. I am watched at all times, but I lock my door and write when I am thus alone, putting my messages inside the little waists of Jannetje, who was ten years of age but yesterday."

The writing stopped at the bottom of the sheet.

One more large piece of paper was written in the childish hand, but contained only a short message. The paper had been wrapped about something, Jannet thought. So Jannetje was another ancestress of the name. She spelled and composed well for a child of ten, Jannet decided.

"Mother sends this," the message said. "Trupers leave today. She thinks that they were only searching for you or waiting for messages from spies. Wait, she says, till she can come to the attick after the Captin goes away."

This was all. It had happened in Revolutionary times, of course. Jannet's imagination could supply the missing information, or some of it. Her an-

cestor had perhaps been visiting his family when the group of British soldiers came upon them too soon for him to escape. Or perhaps he was, indeed, in the work of a spy for General Washington's troops. Wouldn't her uncle and Andy be delighted to read these old messages, so yellowed with age! Carefully Jannet put them again inside of the portfolio, though that, too, was ready to fall apart.

Thinking that there might be some further scrap of information somewhere, Jannet began to examine the dusty articles under the shelf or bed. Any bedding that had once been there had probably been removed as soon as the fugitive had found it no longer necessary to stay there. These other things were of no particular value.

But Jannet had scarcely begun to move the round pewter pot from its long resting place when she heard a sound that startled her. She jumped to her feet with a moment's panic. Suppose Vittoria, for she was almost sure that the ghost was Vittoria, was hiding somewhere and—but a voice assured her, before she was fairly on her feet. There was Cousin Andy's dear head at the top of the secret stairs and peeping in. "What's all this?" he cheerily inquired. "Are you trying to burn up the house with a candle?"

"Oh no; I'm ever so careful,—but do look out, Cousin Andy, for those are bad stairs!"

"Would you care, then, if the old wreck got hurt again?"

" 'Old wreck', indeed! You're the best first cousin that I've got, and I'm proud of your scars, if you have any!"

Andrew Van Meter entered and looked curiously around. "I see that there is a sliding door on this side, too, though Nell did not mention it. She had a telephone message from home, by the way, and left word for you that she was riding over later in the day if she could. She did not know where you were, she said, but when I heard the story I could pretty well guess."

"I did not realize that you all would be up, I've stayed longer here than I intended to. Oh, Andy,—Cousin Andy—I've found the most interesting messages in this old portfolio!"

"Take it with you, then, but I want to see first the way to the attic."

Cousin Andy needed no help up the little steps, but looked down at the ladder and the dark descent. "You were wise not to attempt that, Jannet," said he. "Yes, that must be an opening to the old tool house. That was a pretty clever stunt of the old codger who built this, with three ways of exit, through the attic, the tool house, and your mother's room. But I would not have cared to occupy that little room for any length of time. A six footer

would almost graze the ceiling. Yet he could sit comfortably, or stretch out on that shelf."

"Do you suppose that Jan ever found this?" Jannet asked, while they made their way to the other end of the attic, after Andy had viewed the partition, and the old carpet, and other things kept over the trap door.

"I do not think so. He would have told us. But it is a wonder that Paulina, with her tendency to clean up, has not found the trap door some time during all these years."

"She was afraid of ghosts, Cousin Andy, but I should think that the workmen might have found it when they wired the house for lights."

"It is strange, but they missed it somehow."

Andrew viewed with some amusement the little bed made comfortable for the night and the rocking chair with its comforter and little pillow. The pitcher, which had held the lemonade, and the cooky plate still remained on the floor. "You missed some of your fudge," said Andy, picking up a piece and putting it in his mouth as he sat down on the bed and looked around. "It is some time since I have been in this attic. I never cared for attics; I was always for outdoor sports. Did you know that I can ride again, Jannet?"

"Yes, and I'm so glad. Did *you* know that I had a long talk with Uncle Pieter, and that I'm going to

stay in the family and not go back to school?"

"Good. Sensible girl. Dad and I need somebody like you around."

"I shouldn't think that Uncle Pieter needed any more responsibility, and I heard Miss Hilliard say once that every young person was."

"Dad doesn't regard you in that way, I guess. *I* think that you are an *opportunity.*"

"Why, aren't you nice! Oh, it is so *good* to have a family! Shall you feel like going if Uncle takes me traveling a little bit?"

"I shouldn't be surprised, if it will make me well. I had no hope of ever being well again until a few weeks ago, Jannet, but things look very different now."

Jannet, looking at the more hopeful face, was delighted within herself, for did she not know of someone that was coming this summer, if Cousin Di could manage it? Dear Cousin Andy would be happy yet.

But another surprise was at hand for Jannet, for as Andrew spoke they heard some one in the little hallway, and there in the door stood Cousin Diana and—of all things—Jan!

"Hello, Jannetje," said Jan's none too gentle voice. "So you beat me to it! I'm provoked that I could not have discovered the secret room. How do you get there? I just got in and surprised Mother.

Say, I was the fellow that took the blue comforter, but I got in a different way. I was home the night before you all knew I was there and I had no idea that there was any one in the room. It was always kept locked anyhow. So I just sneaked in and got a cover. The closet didn't seem to have any and my bed had only one blanket."

"Why, Jan! And you never saw me or anything?"

"Never even thought of your being there. I knew the way to the bed and I helped myself. If you will be good, I'll show you how I got in after I see all this."

Jan was off to investigate on his own account, but Jannet detained Mrs. Holt long enough to ask her if Vittoria had come in yet.

"No, she has not reported at all. You feel pretty sure that it was she?"

"Yes, Cousin Di. I'll tell you all about it the first chance I have. But I suppose that Nell gave you a good description of our night up here."

"She did, indeed. You poor children! I slept on peacefully after our late drive home, not knowing that you youngsters were having such a time. You should have called us."

"No use in waking you up, I thought. Where is Uncle Pieter?"

"He had to go out on the farm, but he talked with

Paulina and he wants to see you as soon as he comes in. Here he comes now!"

Stooping and brushing off dust, Mr. Van Meter came from the back, or more properly the front of the attic. He was smiling and remarked that he passed an excited boy on the way. "This is a new place for a family conference," he added. "We have come up in the world, I see."

But Jannet, tired as she was after her experiences of the night, liked this close gathering with its entire loss of all formality. She jokingly offered him the rocking chair, but slipped a hand in his as she told him of the portfolio and its amazing notes. "Nobody *could* have made them up and put them there, could they?"

Uncle Pieter, surprised, put on his glasses and looked at the leather portfolio with its old pockets. "I think not, Jannet, but let us go down to the library and you shall tell me the whole story from the first. I can not get a very connected narrative from Paulina."

Andy threw back his head and laughed at this remark. "Imagine any one's getting a connected narrative from P'lina about anything!"

Jannet displayed the old dolls and dishes which the small box contained. "If they prove to be the ones referred to," said Uncle Pieter, "I may have a case made for them and the portfolio."

CHAPTER XVIII

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERIES

UNCLE PIETER and Cousin Andy were no less interested than Janet in the notes which she had found in the secret room, now no longer a secret from the family. But Mr. Van Meter had given direction that all entrances should be closed and that the affair should not be made the matter of gossip.

Having before deciphered the often blurred writing on the old paper, Jannet was commissioned to read the messages to her uncle and cousin in the library. She did so, and they lost none of their point by being read by the still excited Jannet. She had often been told at school that she read with expression, but she did not see the approving, smiling glance with which her uncle looked at her cousin, as she read.

When she had finished, her uncle said, "It all fits in nicely with the genealogy so far as we have it. This house, the old one, I mean, was finished about the time of the Revolution and this room may have been an afterthought, very convenient for the owner,

as it happened. I know that it was often headquarters for our troops, and probably it harbored the necessary spies. I will commission you, Jannet, to look carefully through all the trunks for old letters or messages of any sort that may tell us more of the history than we already know. From some source your mother knew much about the old stories, but I can not think that she knew of this secret way."

"She would have told you," said Jannet.

"I am not so sure," said Mr. Van Meter, soberly. "She would have told my father, perhaps."

A rap on the door interrupted the conversation at this point. It was Old P'lina who entered at Mr. Van Meter's invitation of "Come in."

Paulina stood unbendingly just inside the door. "I saw the woman Hepsy sent me to and she says that Vittoria was not there last night. Then I went to see Herman at the shop and he acted as though it was none of my business where Vittoria was. That was all."

Without waiting for comment or question, Paulina turned and went away. Andy, looking at Jannet, smiled at her. "You can scarcely get used to our gentle P'lina, can you, Jannet?'

"She is certainly the most sudden person I ever saw!"

Mr. Van Meter did not smile. He sat in thought for a moment, then arose. "I shall see the young

man himself. I want to talk to Vittoria and I do not propose to wait until she may have gone away. If she is going to marry Herman, he certainly will have some news of her soon."

With this explanation, Mr. Van Meter left the room. Jannet remained, talking to her cousin till she heard Jan's rapid footsteps in the hall. "He's looking for me, I suspect, Cousin Andy," she said, hurrying out. "Here I am, Jan, if you want to see me."

"You are the very little Dutchwoman I'm looking for. Come on. I want to show you how I got into your room. I didn't go that round-about way through the attic, nor up a ladder through a tool house! Our ancestor had one more way of getting in and out."

"But it was so funny, Jan, that you should have come to that particular room on that particular night!"

"Not so very. I intended to stay all night with Chick and then changed my mind. But we fooled around, and I didn't want to wake anybody up. So I opened the back door with a key I have and went to bed. Then I was too cold and I got up to prowl around after a blanket or something. There wasn't a thing in the closet where Paulina keeps all the extra things, and I could get into your room, I knew, though it was always kept locked. I didn't

even try the door, but went in, without a light, fumbled around and finally drew off a comforter that was over the foot. I knew, you see, that you were expected, but I didn't have the least idea that you were there. If I had happened to touch your face, —wow!"

"Was the bed kept made up, that you knew you would find something?"

"No, but I took a chance that it was made up for you. See?"

"Why didn't you tell me all this before?"

"I didn't know how you would take it till I got acquainted with you. Then, to tell the truth, I rather hated to do it."

"You need not have hesitated. You needed that comforter and I had enough without it anyhow. But I surely did wonder about it, and with all the ghost stories and all, well, I haven't known what to make of everything."

The next few minutes were most engaging, for Jan showed his cousin how one portion of a panel apparently dropped down into the floor and made a low opening large enough for one person to enter from the hall into the room. "Mercy, Jan, I'll never sleep in peace now, if there are two ways of getting in beside the door!"

"Put bolts on 'em, Jannet. I'll fix it."

"Ask Uncle Pieter first, Jan. Then I'll be glad to

have you do it. But I want it kept possible to open in this way. It's so thrilling, you know."

"Yes, isn't it? But it is hard to forgive you, Jannet, for finding this out about the secret room first."

"I only followed the ghost, Jan. But you don't know how I wondered what the secret was that you had with Paulina, and oh, did you send a little message to your mother by Paulina that you were home?"

"Yes, how did you know that?"

"Oh, I just remember that your mother read something and looked as cross as she ever looks and she was a little embarrassed, I thought, when she excused herself. And then you came just as if you had just arrived, and told me a whopper about coming from Chick's!"

"That was no whopper. I *had* come. I rode over there early, but of course it wasn't the *first* time I had come from there."

The matter of his early appearance at this time had also to be explained, but Jan related how school was closing early and how he and Chick decided not to wait a minute after examinations if they could get permission to leave, from parents and school authorities. "Think of all that was going on at the farm and I missing it! Mother expected me this time, but I wrote her to let me surprise you."

It occurred to Jannet that she had not had anything to eat, and she felt a little faint, to her own surprise. "What's the matter, Jannet?" asked Jan, suddenly noticing how she looked.

"Why, I'm hungry, I believe. We had some cookies and fudge and lemonade last night but that isn't very staying."

"Haven't you had any *breakfast?* Believe *me,* I never forget my meals. Come with me, child. If Daphne doesn't fill you up with griddle-cakes, then my name is Mike!"

Laughing, but not so sorry for the stout young arm that led her along, Jannet willingly made the descent to the kitchen, where kind old Daphne fussed over her and stirred up a fresh supply of batter for her cakes. Jan, quite at home with the cook, made some cocoa, which might have been better had he followed Daphne's directions; but the result was hot and stimulating at least. "Now you go and lie down somewhere, honey, and git some sleep," said Daphne, who had heard what she was not supposed to hear from Hepsy, who at last understood the visit to her room in the "dead of night."

Jannet needed no coaxing to take the advice thus offered. Well fortified and comfortable after her hot cakes, cocoa and real maple syrup, she was escorted to the library by Jan and tucked on the davenport there with a light cover suitable to the warm

day. Jan thought that she would sleep better there than in her own room, all things considered, but Jannet knew that she could sleep anywhere. Jan drew the curtain with its fringes before the alcove in which the davenport stood. From little windows the soft breeze came in gently. Jannet never knew when Jan went away, so quickly did she sink into slumber.

It must have been in the late afternoon when she wakened. She had not known when Cousin Di and Jan came and looked at her, and debated whether to waken her for dinner or not, nor when Uncle Pieter came and looked down upon her with a smile. "Poor little Jannetje Jan," he said, pulling the curtains together and going back to his desk to wait for some one.

It was when conversation was going on between her uncle and some one else that she wakened. "You can wait outside, Herman," she heard her uncle say. "It will be better for Vittoria to talk to me alone, and I can assure you that she will receive every courtesy."

Jannet felt very uncomfortable, though at first still drowsy. But after all, she was the one who made the first discovery. It was not eavesdropping, she hoped, and she could not help it, anyway. She almost drowsed off to sleep again in the first few minutes, while Vittoria was answering Mr. Van Meter's questions about where she had been. Vittoria

was decidedly sulky and did not want to answer any questions. Finally Mr. Van Meter told her that perfect frankness was her only course. "So far as I know, you have done no real harm in playing the ghost, but we want to know why you did it, and of course we want no more of it. It was most dangerous for the girls to be locked in and frightened."

"You don't intend to send me away, then, till I get married?"

"Not as long as you make no trouble for us. And we want no gossip about this, either, for our own sakes and that of you and Herman."

This seemed to relieve Vittoria, who began to talk. "I did it first to get even with Paulina who scared me once. I told her that I did not believe in the family ghosts. She did, but since nothing happened, she made something happen and I caught her at it, hiding in the attic where I had my box with my savings in it. She was more scared than I was, for she really believes in ghosts.

"Then,—well, Mrs. Van Meter told me to make all the trouble I could for you, and she was the one that found that secret room and played ghost sometimes. She sent me back here."

Vittoria paused, perhaps half afraid to go on, but her listener made no comment. "I did it once in a while, half for fun, too, to scare Hepsy and Paulina,

but you never heard any of it, so why would your wife want me to do it? Then, when the girls were here, I didn't want them snooping around where I had my box, so I concluded that I'd give them a good scare. I did, too, but Jannet almost caught me last night. And when Hepsy told me that she asked about what perfume I used, I knew that she knew. I went to a show with Herman first and I had some of Hepsy's new perfume on my handkerchief and on my dress. I did not think of it when I slipped on the things I wore to scare them.

"I whipped around, ahead of Jannet, and went around through the attic again to get my things; and then I was going to stay all night in Jan's room, but I heard them coming and went the other way, sticking the things under Jan's bed. They found them, Paulina said. I went to stay all night with a girl I knew, not where I usually stay. That was all."

"Paulina said that you went into the trunks to get your costume."

"Perhaps she thought so; but I never opened a trunk. These things I found in a box that was tied up in paper and in the back part of the attic."

"Very well, Vittoria. Have your box taken out of the attic and do not go there again, please. I would put my savings in the bank, or if you care to give them to me, I will put them in my safe. Now

I want to ask you if you remember some incidents connected with my sister, Jannet's mother."

Jannet, behind the curtains, was thoroughly awake by this time and with half a mind to go out now, for perhaps she should not hear what was to follow. She sat up, but decided not to go out. Vittoria was in the mood to tell now. Her uncle's voice was not unkind and she knew that Vittoria must be relieved to think that she need not lose her place and the money which she wanted to make.

"I have kept it in mind," her uncle continued, "that you served my former wife very faithfully, even if mistakenly at times. She had trained you and had given you some education. It was to be expected that you should have a regard for her." Then Jannet heard her uncle tell Vittoria the incident of the telegram and what Paulina had said.

Vittoria remembered the occasion. "Yes, I'll tell you more, Mr. Van Meter," she said excitedly. "I did not care very much for your wife when she stood over me and threatened me with all sorts of things if I did not tear up a letter that had come to you. 'It is from his precious sister,' she said, 'and I shall say to my husband, if he asks, that I have not destroyed any of his mail.' And the telegram was from her, too, and she begged you to help her find her husband and baby."

There was silence for a little. Jannet heard her uncle's slow tapping on his desk. Finally he said, "Do you remember anything else, Vittoria? Were there any other letters?"

"One little letter that I had to tear up for her. There may have been other telegrams, but I did not know about them if there were. She was watching for the mail in those days, or had me do it."

"I see. Well, Vittoria, this is very valuable information to me. I can not feel very happy over what you did, Vittoria, but it would do no good now to punish you in any way, even if I could. You had part in what was a very dreadful thing."

"Oh, yes, sir!" To Jannet's surprise, she heard Vittoria sobbing a little. "I was only sixteen, but I knew better; but I thought since they all died, it did not make so much difference,—until she came."

"It may have made the difference that we could have saved my sister, Vittoria, and that Jannet need not have been in a boarding school for years. But you are not so much to blame as the one who ordered you to do it. It must have been a shock to you when we discovered Jannet. Well, Vittoria, we can not help the past. We have all made mistakes. Try to be a good girl and a good wife to Herman. I will have some work for him when I build the new barn."

"Oh, thank you, sir, I'll—," but Vittoria's voice was tearful, and Jannet heard her uncle open and

close the door. Vittoria had gone, too upset to say another word. She had come in sullen and hard, and left all touched and softened by Mr. Van Meter's treatment of her.

Jannet was proud of her uncle, and when he immediately crossed the room and parted the curtains to see if she were awake, she looked lovingly up into his rather troubled eyes to tell him so. "O uncle, you were so good to Vittoria! I was afraid that I ought not to be here, but I was more afraid to come out."

"I knew that you were there, my child, but I'd like to be alone now for a little while."

Jannet clung to his arm a minute, then ran out and to her room to get some more of the attic dust off in her tub and make herself quite fresh for supper. Her previous toilet had been made quite hastily and superficially, she knew.

Hepsy waited upon them at supper, but Jannet knew that a chastened and more considerate Vittoria would be helping to-morrow. Cousin Diana and Jan had their turn at the portfolio and its messages after supper, when they all gathered for a while in the living room. Then a sober Uncle Pieter took them, to put them away in his desk, and they saw no more of him that evening.

CHAPTER XIX

RECOVERED TREASURE

JAN'S secret must be shared with his chum, but both he and Nell promised to keep it to themselves. For several days there were frequent reunions either at the Van Meter farm or that of the Clydes. The summer promised to be a happy one.

Uncle Pieter said that he would have a new lock put on the attic door, but so far he had been too busy to attend to it. Vittoria had handed back the key which she had had from her mistress, the second Mrs. Van Meter. She had handed her savings to Mr. Van Meter, who took them to a bank for her. Paulina, Jannet knew, from various remarks by that worthy lady, still kept her savings at home, but no one knew just where, which was just as well. Then no one felt any responsibility. So Cousin Diana said. But it would be a shame if anything happened to that for which Paulina had worked so long, and Jannet meant to speak to her uncle about it,—some day.

The ghost had been discovered, but what had be-

come of the pearls was still a mystery to Jannet. She felt that she knew Hepsy and Vittoria, Daphne, too, and others about the place who seldom came to the house, but of no one could she suspect the theft. Her lovely pearls! She wondered that Uncle Pieter did not do something; but Uncle Pieter was very busy. Once when she was coming back from a ride, Uncle Pieter, also on his horse, rode up to her and asked, "Any sign of the pearls?"

"No sir," she replied.

"I will come to your room some day," said he, "and you shall show me where you found them."

That was all, and Jannet would have been impatient had she had any time to become so, but there were too many pleasant plans afoot. She loved the place now and even without a horse to ride would have been perfectly content. Early apples were ripe in the orchard and the young lambs on the hills were the prettiest things Jannet had ever seen, she thought. May was hurrying by very fast, and Jannet was several pounds heavier, especially since she had joined Jan in his more or less frequent visits to the kitchen. Jan pointed to fat Daphne in warning, but Uncle Pieter pinched her cheek lightly once in a while and remarked that a farm was better than a school for growing lasses.

The opening from the tool house to the ladder in the secret way had been made into a stout door, se-

cured on the inside by a bolt; but as burglars were almost unknown in these parts, Jannet began to feel about it as the rest of them did and never bothered to bolt her door at night. She turned her key and looked to see that the panel was closed tightly and that was all. Bottle and wires had been taken from the attic and no sounds other than those made by an occasional squirrel disturbed the night.

One evening Jannet wrote somewhat later than she had intended, for she was telling Miss Hilliard all about the mystery and the excitement. Could it be, Jannet thought, so short a time since she left the school and came to Uncle Pieter's? But so much had happened! And she had made herself such a part of the family, in these last days especially. Jannet felt very happy and told Miss Hilliard so, though she took care to say that not even her own family could ever take Miss Hilliard's place in her heart.

"Perhaps I'll even find my pearls," she thought, as she slipped between her sheets and drew only a light blanket over her. She fell asleep thinking of school affairs, for Lina had just written that school closed a little later than usual and would not be over till the second week in June. Uncle Pieter had said that she might have Lina to visit her and she "would write to L"—, and her purpose drifted off into a dream.

But a more gentle ghost was drifting toward Jan-

net, one as ignorant of Jannet as Jannet was of the ghost.

It was about the hour for ghosts, midnight, when an automobile turned into the drive from the main road and rolled rapidly up and around the house and even into the back part not far from the barns.

"I can't see a light anywhere," said the lady who sat with the driver and who was peering out with the greatest interest. "If it were not for the trees and certain landmarks, I would think that we had driven into the wrong place."

"'Perhaps we have," suggested the other lady who sat behind.

"No, indeed. I am not mistaken, but I scarcely know what to do. If we had not been so delayed,—I just meant to call, since I was so near,—and I wanted to see—one or two things."

"If this were *my* old home, I certainly would see what I wanted to, even if I waked somebody up. You are hopeless sometimes, my dear!"

The first lady laughed. "So I am. Well, I see that they have left the old house intact anyhow. Pieter said that he intended to do so. But you can scarcely understand how I want to see it and how I do *not* want to see it. Come on, then, Francis, see me to the door, please, and Lydia, it is goodnight if I can get inside, though I may sit up until morning, thinking. I hope that you may be able to sleep in the

village hotel. I appreciate your sacrifice. But call for me after breakfast, unless I telephone for you earlier."

"Please spare me unless you are in danger," replied the lady addressed as Lydia. "Perhaps it will be just as well if you can not get in."

No light appeared at any of the windows, though the visit of an automobile might well have aroused some one. The lady and gentleman walked through the pergola and into the court to the front door, and the lady drew a key from her purse. "Odd that you kept the keys all these years," said the gentleman.

"Yes, isn't it?" the lady replied, trying the key. It turned, but there was a bolt of some sort within. "There is another door, Francis," she said, and they walked around to the rear door, where another key was inserted. "Honestly, my courage almost fails me, Francis."

"Why don't you ring, then, instead of getting in this foolish way?"

"I always was a little foolish, Francis, as you well know, and I am just a little afraid to meet my—why, this lets me in, Francis. Now I shall be safely inside till morning at least, and if I can reach my room without meeting old P'lina, I shall gain courage from the old background. Goodnight and thank you."

The door closed and the man called Francis walked back to the car, entered it and drove away.

But none of them had seen a dark figure which kept to the shadows and which stood behind a tree when the lady entered the house. Waiting a little, listening at the door, it, too, entered at the back of the old house.

The lady, with a small flashlight, hurried rather breathlessly up the back stairs and stood smiling a little, hesitating between routes, and fingering a small bunch of keys. No one could see her smiles in the dark, to be sure, but by a sudden impulse she turned to the attic stairs, opened the door there and disappeared from the ken of the man listening at the foot of the first flight. Stealthily he followed, occasionally letting the light in his hand fall before him. But he was familiar with the place, it would have been evident to any one who had seen him.

At the attic door, which stood ajar, he paused, looking within at the small light which proceeded a little slowly into the depths beyond.

"Mercy,—I had forgotten how dusty attics are!" he heard her say, as she drew aside the carpet, which had been replaced, and opened the trap door. "Now, if only I don't break my neck!"

But the neck did not seem to be broken, for there was no sound of any calamity as the light disap-

peared. The man then turned on his own light and softly walked across the attic. But he sat down a few moments later in the secret room, to wait, for he did not desire to be present when first she entered the room below.

The panel opened without waking the quietly sleeping Jannet. The little flashlight searched the lower regions of the room first, for possible obstacles. It flashed on the rug, the desk, the little chair. Why, whose pretty slippers were those by the chair?

For a moment only the light flashed on the bed, with some of its covers neatly thrown back across its foot and the outline of some small person lying beneath sheet and blanket. How foolish she had been to think that her room would not be occupied!

Should she go back the way in which she had come? Once more she flashed her light upon the bed,—why this could almost have been herself in days gone by! Jannet's fair hair, her quiet, sweet young face, the slender hand under her cheek,—who *was* this?

Tossing aside the tight hat from her own fluffy golden crown of thick hair, the lady, startled, touched, found her way to the little electric lamp upon the desk and turned on the current. The room glowed a little from the rosy shade. She tiptoed to the bed, bending over with lips parted and amazed eyes.

The light, perhaps, or the presence, woke Jannet, still half in a dream as she looked up into the face above her. Whose was it, so lovely with its surprised and tender smile? "Why, Mother," she softly said, "did you come,—at last?"

"Dear heart!" exclaimed a low, musical voice. "It can't be true, can it? You are not my own little baby that I lost,—but you have a look of Douglas! Who *are* you?"

Jannet, her own amazement growing as she wakened more thoroughly, raised herself on her elbow, then sat up, and the lady reached for her hand. Jannet's other hand came to clasp more firmly the older one with its one flashing ring above a wedding ring. "I don't understand." she said. "I thought that you were my mother. See? You look just like her picture, and I suppose that you are too young, then."

But the lady, whose breath came so quickly and who looked so eagerly into Jannet's eyes, did not follow them to the picture. "If the picture is that of your mother, dear child, then I am your mother, for that is my picture and this is the room that was mine. Oh, how cruel, my dear, that we have had to do without each other all these years!"

Jannet's arms went around her mother's neck as her mother clasped her, gently, yet possessively, and the sweetest feeling of rest came to Jannet, though

her throat choked some way, and she felt her mother catching her breath and trying to control herself. Then her mother sat down on the bed beside her, holding Jannet off a moment to look at her again. "I believe that this is heaven and we are both ghosts," said Jannet, half smiling and winking hard.

"Not a bit of it," said the other Jannet. "We are both as real as can be, though we shall be real enough there some day, I hope. Your mouth has a look of your father,—O Jannet! The tragedy of it!"

"Don't cry, Mother! I have so much to tell you,—"

"And I so much to ask. Have you been here all these years?"

"Oh, no,—just a few weeks. Uncle Pieter found me, and oh, we must tell Uncle Pieter right away, because he feels so terribly about things he has just found out, how you must have written and telegraphed to him and he never got the telegrams and letters!"

Jannet's mother looked at her in surprise. Her face had sobered at the mention of her brother, but now she gave close attention to what Jannet went on to explain. "I should have come," she said, "instead of depending on messages. But I was so ill."

A little knock drew their attention to the opening into the secret stairway, for Jannet senior had not

touched the spring which would replace the panel. There stood Uncle Pieter, but everything was so surprising that this did not seem unnatural.

"Pardon me, Jannet," he said, "for following you. I was sleepless, and as I was taking a turn about the gardens I saw strangers, to all appearances, entering the house. I came to see what it meant, but by the time you reached the attic I knew who it was. I sat in the secret chamber to wait for your surprise!"

Uncle Pieter was hesitating at the opening, but with a few steps his sister had reached him and extended her hand. Tears were in her eyes as she said, "I am glad, Pieter, that what I have thought all these years is not true, and oh, how glad I am that you found this little girl for me! But I am in a daze just now. Can we have a talk? Where has the child been, and what can you both tell me about my husband?"

"None of us can sleep, Jannet, till it is explained. I will call old P'lina. She will want to be in this, and can make us some coffee. Get dressed, Jannet Junior, and bring your mother to the library."

How wonderful to have a pretty, young mother, that helped her into her clothes, kissed soundly the face that glowed from the application of rose soap and water, and selected a pair of shoes for her from the closet! But she was going to do things for her mother,—mostly.

They heard Mr. Van Meter rapping at Paulina's door and heard his rapid stride as he left the house, leaving it all alight as he went through the corridors on the way to the library. Paulina, all astonished and more speechless than usual, came out of her room in time to meet Mrs. Eldon and Jannet as they started for the library. But Paulina held her mother's hand tightly, Jannet noticed, as they walked along the corridor together. "Where've you been all this time Miss Jannet?" Paulina finally asked.

"In Europe, P'lina, studying, singing and giving some lessons myself. I'll tell you all about it very soon."

Mr. Van Meter was pacing up and down the library, as they could hear when they approached the open door. "Why, Pieter, you have made a lovely place of this!" his sister exclaimed, taking the chair he drew up for her.

"Do you think so? Wait till you see all the old treasures I have furbished up and put around in the old house. You will stay with us, I hope. But I know how overcome you must feel to find this child, and I will tell first all that we have to explain, with Jannet's help."

Quietly they all sat in the comfortable library chairs, Jannet scarcely able to take her eyes from her mother, while her uncle told all that they knew, soberly saying that his wife could "scarcely have been

herself" when she intercepted the messages. With a serious face, Mrs. Eldon listened to the account.

One pleasant little interlude occurred when Mr. Van Meter said that Jannet had not yet heard how he found her. "You would never guess it, my child," he said, and reached into his desk for a booklet tied with gay ribbons.

"Why, that's our annual 'Stars and Stripes,' " cried Jannet, recognizing it at once.

"The same," said her uncle. "One of our guests left it here in my library and I idly picked it up one evening. Glancing through it, my eye fell on your picture first, then on your name, and I read your history at once." Mr. Van Meter smiled as he handed the open book to his sister.

"Is this 'Who's Who,' my daughter?" lightly asked Jannet's mother, taking the book and looking at the account on the page of photographs reproduced with a short account of each pupil.

"It is of our school, Mother, and those girls are all in my class." Wasn't it great that her mother had a sense of humor and was smiling over the booklet? But she began to read the account of her own child aloud:

" 'Janet Eldon is one of the fixed stars in the firmament of our Alma Mater, and her brilliancy is of the first magnitude. She is the daughter of Douglas Eldon and has her Scotch Janet from his mother's

side of the house. Janet came originally from the Buckeye state, but claims Philadelphia as her real home. She sings and plays and enjoys our wild rides about Fairmount Park,—' "

Here Mrs. Eldon stopped. "No wonder that you looked Jannet up when you read that. It was providential!"

Mrs. Eldon's story supplied the rest of the explanation. She had returned from the hospital, after wondering why her husband did not continue his visits there, and realizing that he must be sick, to find some one else in their little apartment and her trunks packed and stored. The woman in charge was shocked and startled upon seeing her, having been told that she had not lived through her illness. "Douglas must have been delirious then," said Mrs. Eldon. "The poor boy was taking his baby to his mother, he told the woman, and when she asked if she should pack up the things he 'thanked her kindly' and paid her, she said.

"Then I telegraphed and wrote, frantically. No word came from anyone. I see now that Mother Eldon was in a strange place, at the hospital, and probably had not yet arranged to have her mail forwarded, if she was only in the midst of her moving. She was seeing that my baby was pulled through, and very likely the final burial of my poor Douglas was postponed, for I even found the name of the minister

of their old church and wrote to him about it. If he ever wrote to me, I was gone by that time. Meanwhile I had traced another young father who had been traveling about the same time with a sick baby that died. Kind people had buried the little one, and the father had wandered from the hospital in the night and found a grave in the river." Mrs. Eldon did not add to the sober look on Jannet's face by telling her that for years flowers had been placed at Easter upon a tiny grave in the far West.

"I was ill again, and then friends that I had known in New York chanced upon me in Los Angeles. They urged an ocean voyage to strengthen me. It was Hawaii, then the East and then Europe and music and I have been in America only a few weeks, coming to arrange for engagements."

"O Mother! I shall hear you sing!"

"And you shall sing yourself, perhaps."

"No, Jannet is going to be a missionary," smiled Uncle Pieter. "So she told me."

But Mrs. Eldon only patted Jannet's hand and told her that it was a noble purpose. "We shall see about the future, my child, but I shall accept your invitation to stay here, Pieter, for the present. I am not real sure but all this is a dream."

Coffee, sandwiches and some of Daphne's latest triumph in the line of white cake and frosting were brought in by old P'lina's capable hands, so glad to

serve the older Jannet once more; and while they refreshed themselves Jannet told her mother many things about her school and her dearest friends, Miss Hilliard, Miss Marcy and Lina in particular. "We must invite them all to come here as soon as school is out," said Uncle Pieter. "Miss Hilliard is Jannet's guardian and there will be things to arrange. I tried to trace what had become of what would have been Jannet's little fortune, but without success, of course."

"I had turned everything into available funds," said Mrs. Eldon, "but there is still enough for us both."

There was a nap for them all after the little lunch. Then came the exciting morrow, with breakfast and the surprise of Cousin Andy, Cousin Di and Jan, and later the visit of Mr. and Mrs. Murray, Mrs. Eldon's friends. Jannet almost shivered to think how nearly she had missed seeing her mother, as the circumstances of the delay and of her hesitation were related. Mr. and Mrs. Murray, whom Jannet senior called Francis and Lydia, warned her against giving up her profession and told the glowing Jannet junior about her mother's beautiful voice.

Jan telephoned the news to Nell and Chick and stopped Jannet in the hall one time to ask her, "How about the fortune that old Grandma Meer told you? I guess that you'll get the long trip to Europe with

your mother, and how about the 'luck when you are found'?"

Jannet beamed upon her cousin who was so kindly in his sympathy. "I still don't believe in 'fortunes,' and neither do you, Mister Jan, but it is funny how they hit it sometimes, isn't it?"

It was after two blissful and thrilling days that Jannet thought of the pearls, when her mother opened the desk to write a letter. Jannet had been examining the knot hole in the panels where she had seen the light on one of those exciting nights of which she had been telling her mother; but she came to stand by her mother a moment and a vision of the pearls flashed before her.

"We must share the desk now, Jannet," said the elder Jannet. "It is a shame to take it partly away from you. Your cousin has been telling me how delighted you were with the room and its furniture."

"I'd much rather have a mother than a desk," lovingly said Jannet, "but I must tell you about finding the pearls,—and losing them again!"

"What do you mean, child?" Mrs. Eldon laid down her pen and turned to her daughter.

To her astonished mother Jannet related the story and opened the secret drawer by way of illustration. This time the drawer came out most easily, and both Jannets exclaimed in surprise. In their case, as beautiful as ever, the shining pearls lay before them!

"Why Jannet!"

"Mother! There must be something queer about that desk! Take them,—quick!"

As if she were afraid that they would vanish before their eyes, Jannet gathered pearls and case and placed them in her mother's hands. "Oh, you shall wear them the next time you sing!"

Jannet stood looking at her mother, who was turning over the pearls. Then she examined the drawer. "I have an idea, Mother," she said. "I think that somebody fixed this with a sort of false bottom. I did something before I opened the drawer that time I found them, and I think that I must have done it again when I closed it, or some time before the time they were gone.

"See this little worn place, with the wood that gives a little? There is a spring under that and it lets down things or brings them up again, perhaps."

Mrs. Eldon looked doubtfully at Jannet, but Jannet dropped her own fountain pen into the drawer, closed it, and pressed the place to which she had referred. Then she pressed the spring which opened the drawer. No fountain pen was in sight. Again Jannet closed the drawer. Again she pressed the wood. Again she pressed the spring, and the drawer came out. There lay the fountain pen.

"Quod erat demonstrandum!" smiled Jannet

senior. "Isn't that strange? We must have Pieter up here to show us how that is managed."

"I think now that a piece of wood just shoots in over whatever is there," said Jannet, "instead of letting them down." Jannet was examining the drawer again. "See, the drawer is much more shallow when what you put in isn't there!"

Jannet senior laughed at Jannet junior's explanation. "You are like your father, Jannet, to want to find it all out yourself. To think of their having been there all these years!"

"I called them 'Phantom Treasure,'" said Jannet, taking up a white and gleaming strand.

"Like you, they were waiting for me. These are not the greatest treasure I have recovered, my darling child!"

"Well, Mother, it took three 'ghosts,' and one *angel* that descended by the secret stairs, to bring *my* treasure to *me*. Let me give you another big hug, to make sure that your are real!"

THE END